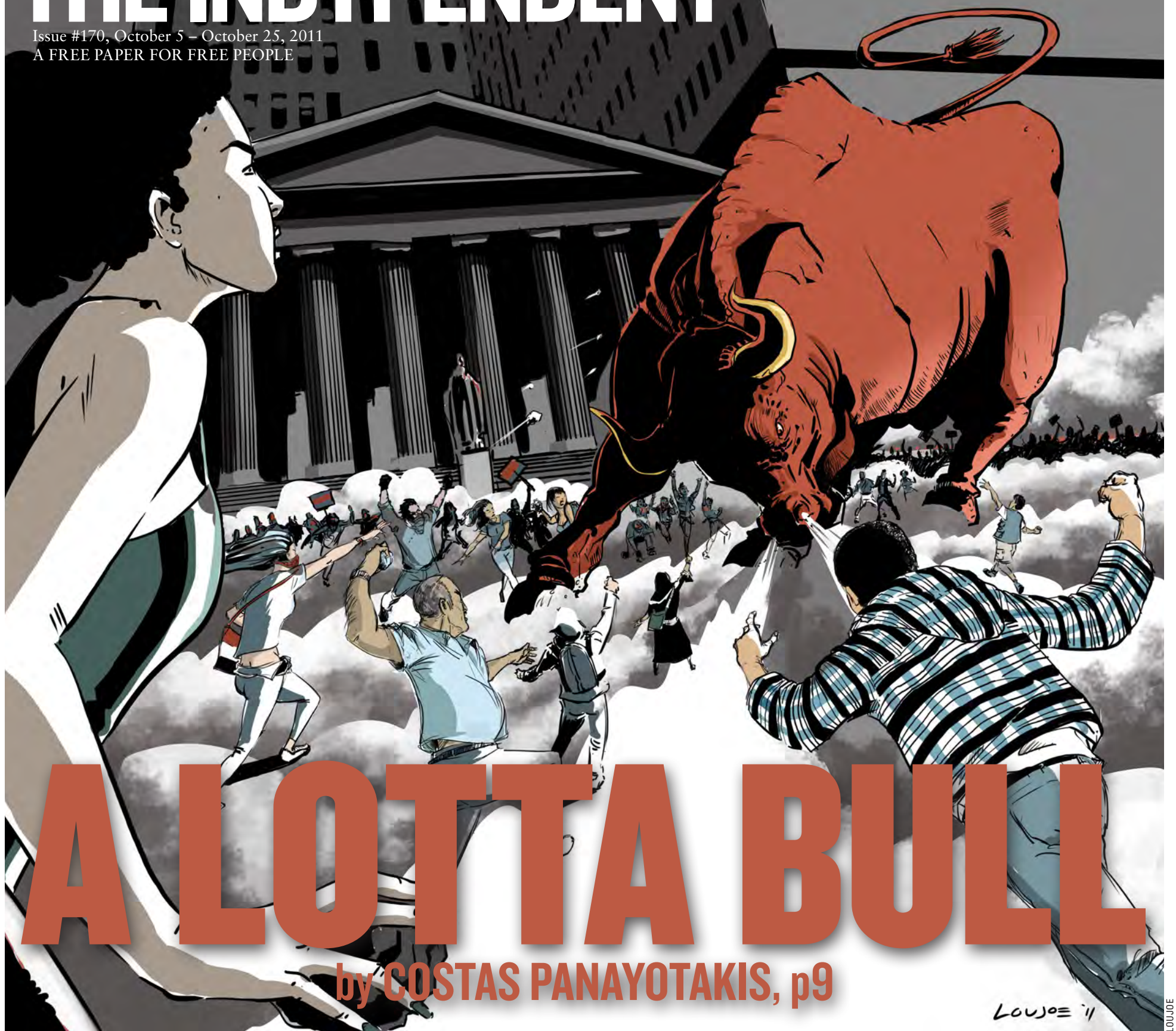


TIME TO OCCUPY WALL STREET, p10

THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #170, October 5 – October 25, 2011
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE



A LOTTA BULL

by COSTAS PANAYOTAKIS, p9

LOUJANE '11

LOUJANE



POST OFFICE IN PERIL, p4



MEXICO HEALING, p12



RED-BAITING CUNY, p16

INDYPENDENT.ORG



THE INDYPENDENT, INC.
666 BROADWAY, SUITE 500
NEW YORK, NY 10012

PHONE: 212-904-1282

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:
Ellen Davidson, Anna Gold,
John Tarleton

GENERAL MANAGER:
Arun Gupta

SENIOR EDITOR/COORDINATOR:
Elizabeth Henderson

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR:
Manny Jalonschi

ILLUSTRATIONS COORDINATOR:
Frank Reynoso

DESIGNERS:
Steven Arnerich, Anna Gold,
Mikael Tarkela

GENERAL INQUIRIES:
contact@indypendent.org
SUBMISSIONS AND NEWS TIPS:
submissions@indypendent.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS:
indypendent.org/donate

ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION:
ads@indypendent.org

READER COMMENTS:
letters@indypendent.org

VOLUNTEER:
volunteer@indypendent.org

INDYKIDS:
info@indykids.org

The Indypendent is a New York-based free newspaper published 16 times a year on Wednesdays for our print and online readership of more than 200,000. It is produced by a network of volunteers who report, write, edit, draw, design, take photos, distribute, fundraise and provide website management. Since 2000, more than 650 journalists, artists and media activists have participated in this project. Winner of more than 50 New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Indypendent* is funded by subscriptions, reader donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of people locally and globally. *The Indypendent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

The Indypendent is affiliated with the New York City Independent Media Center, which is part of the global Indymedia movement, an international network dedicated to fostering grassroots media production, and with *IndyKids*, a children's newspaper. NYC IMC is an open publishing website (nyc.indymedia.org).

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTORS: Sam Alcott, Bennett Baumer, Nikki Saint Bautista, Liz Borda, Louis Joseph Comeau IV, Ellen Davidson, Erika Eichelberger, Renée Feltz, Seth Fisher, Sophie Forbes, Susanne Fuchs, Mary Annaise Heglar, Irina Ivanova, Alex Kane, Amelia Holowaty Krales, Jeffrey Alan Love, Mike Newton, Jaisal Noor, Jessica Patrick, Nicholas Powers, Sophie Ragsdale, Ann Schneider, Marlena Buczek Smith, Zachary Smith, John Tarleton, Steven Wishnia and Amy Wolf.

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK AND
TWITTER AND FOLLOW OUR
BLOGGERS.

community calendar

SUBMIT YOUR EVENTS AT
INDYEVENTS@GMAIL.COM.

WED OCT 5

7pm • Free
DISCUSSION: THE CASE FOR SOCIALISM.
Come discuss socialist views on healthcare, equal rights and overcoming the corporate state.
Walker Stage, 56 Walker St
646-421-2035 • nycsocialist.org

THU OCT 6

12pm • Free
RALLY: STOP THE MACHINE. An encampment and multi-day rally organized to demand peace and the chance to build a just and sustainable future.
Freedom Plaza, Washington, D.C.
202-688-2444 • October2011.org

5:30-9:30pm • \$25/\$50/\$100
BENEFIT: *INDYKIDS* 6TH ANNIVERSARY.
Help raise funds for *IndyKids* and meet some of the paper's volunteers and supporters.
Black Finn Bar, 218 E 53rd St
212-592-0116 • indykids.org

6:30-9:30pm • Free
EVENT: THE HISTORY OF NEW YORK CITY'S DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT.
Focusing on issues of transportation and accessibility, Dr. James Weisman will outline the history of the disability rights movement in the city.
Muhlenberg Library, 209 W 23rd St

FRI OCT 7

8:30am-3pm • Free
CONFERENCE: DEFENDING PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION. Francis Fox Piven and other professors will engage in a collective idea-sharing session about how to reverse the current trend towards divesting in public higher education. Sponsored by the CUNY Graduate Center and the Professional Staff Congress-CUNY. Register at defendingpublichighereducation.commonsgc.cuny.edu.
CUNY Graduate Center, 365 5th Ave
212-354-1252 • defendpubhied@gmail.com

SAT OCT 8

12-2pm • Free
RALLY: BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW.
On the tenth anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan, peace activists including Grandmothers Against the War, Military Families Speak Out, Peace Action Manhattan and the West Side Campaign Against Hunger are staging a rally to demand that the U.S. government end the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and focus on domestic issues.

reader comments

Post your own comments online at the end of each article or email letters@indypendent.org.

WORKERS PAY THE PRICE?

Responses to “*The Verizon Strike: Worker Strength or Missed Opportunity?*,” Sept. 6:

I find this article lamenting how more damage wasn't inflicted on Verizon to be short-sighted and sad. Unions are parasitic by nature. If they do mortal damage to their host, then they too die. Even if they don't mortally wound the company, they often damage themselves like with the UPS strike in the late 1990s. I'm not the only one who remembers that strike, and not the only one who is smart enough not to rely on them. Fewer shipments for UPS to handle means fewer employees needed, and fewer union members.

— TOURIST

42nd St and 2nd Ave
267-324-3042 • mfso.org

SUN OCT 9

12:30-2:30pm • Free
DISCUSSION: BROWN BAG LUNCH — ANTI-NUCLEAR ACTIVISTS FROM JAPAN AND US. American anti-nuclear activists are joined by a delegation from Japan's Gensuikyo Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs to discuss stories, common challenges and some possible strategies going forward.
Unitarian Church of All Souls,
1157 Lexington Ave
646-723-1749 • info@panys.org

11am-6pm • Free
BOOK FAIR: THE SIXTH NEW YORK BOOK FAIR EXPO. This year's book fair will present the work of 100 local authors along with music, theater and literary readings.
Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadows Corona Park
718-592-9700 • queensmuseum.org

MON OCT 10

1-3pm • Free
RALLY: COLUMBUS DAY FUR PROTEST AT MACY'S 34TH. This two-hour rally serves to remind customers of the animal cruelty funded by the fur trade.
Macy's Department Store, 151 W 34th St
732-693-9044 • faunnj.org

7:30-9pm • Free or \$5 for snacks
CLASS: ECONOMICS FOR ACTIVISTS. This class will cover the mechanics of capitalism as well as its increasing failure as an economic system.
Freedom Hall, 113 W 128th St
212-222-0633 • fsp@nyct.net

WED OCT 12

7pm • Free
READING: *THE JOHN CARLOS STORY*. Cornel West and Dave Zirin will speak at the launch party for the memoir of John Carlos, one of the two athletes involved in the 1968 Olympics Black Power Salute.
Rosenthal Pavillion at the Kimmel Center,
60 Washington Square South
johncarlosstory.eventbrite.com

FRI OCT 14

4-6 pm • Free
LECTURE: INDIGENOUS AS ALIEN.
This group discussion focuses on the nation-state's power to exclude or deport unwanted immigrants, even as it ignores the impact of colonialism on indigenous populations.

SEPT—OCT

UPCOMING EVENTS

THU OCT 6 5:30-7:30pm

CLASS: ADAM SMITH IN BEIJING.
The start of a six-week series led by Professor Ganesh Trichur that investigates the significance of the rise of East Asia and what it means for the crisis of American Hegemony through the writing of Giovanni Arrighi.
Sliding Scale \$65/\$85

TUE OCT 11 7:30-9:30pm

CLASS: POLITICAL ECONOMY AFTER ECONOMICS.
Author and former professor David Laibman leads this class which kicks off ten sessions examining the evolving nature of political economic theories in the era of globalism and quantitative economics.
Sliding Scale \$95/\$125

SUN OCT 16 2pm

READING AND SCREENING: COMMUNITY ORGANIZING IN RADICAL TIMES.
The authors of *Hillbilly Nationalists*, *Urban Race Rebels* and *Black Power* contextualize this screening of *American Revolution II*, which follows the early historic collaboration between a nascent Rainbow Coalition with the poor white Young Patriots Organization.
Sliding Scale \$6/\$10/\$15

THE BRECHT FORUM

BUILDING
A MOVEMENT
THAT MOVES
451 West Street
(btwn Bank and Bethune)

Please
register online:
brechtforum.org
212-242-4201

CUNY Graduate Center, Room 8201.01,
365 5th Ave
212-817-7000 • gc.cuny.edu

SAT OCT 15

2-4pm • Free
CLASS: WRITING AND REPORTING FOR KIDS. Provided by IndyKids, the free kids newspaper with a conscience, the class is aimed at children 10 to 13 years old that are interested in reporting and journalism.
Tompkins Square Library, 331 E 10th St
212-592-0116 • indykids.org

5pm • Free
RALLY: VIGIL AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE.
This march and candlelit vigil organized by Ministers United for Change commemorates all victims of gun violence in New York City.
124th St and 5th Ave
212-433-0843

6-10pm • \$5
FILM AND DISCUSSION: BENEFIT FOR

COINTELPRO VICTIM SEKOU ODINGA.
Panelists and performers remember the aggressive use of COINTELPRO domestic oppression to stifle or destroy many black and Chicano movements in the 1960s and '70s.
Riverside Church, 490 Riverside Dr, Room 9T
718-512-5008 • nycjericho@gmail.com

MON OCT 17

3-5pm • Free w/ registration
PANEL DISCUSSION: THE WORLD AT 7 BILLION — SUSTAINING OUR FUTURE. As the world population hits 7 billion this year, this discussion explores the environmental and social consequences caused by rapid population growth.
Roone Arledge Auditorium, 2920 Broadway
tcp2114@columbia.edu

**SIGN UP TO RECEIVE OUR WEEKLY
CALENDAR VIA EMAIL AT INDY-
PENDENT.ORG**



RIP-OFF!

New Report Details Rampant Rent Fraud Across the City

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

Almost half the rent-stabilized apartments in New York City may have illegally high rents, according to a study released in August by the housing activist group Make the Road New York.

The report, “Rent Fraud: Illegal Rent Increases and the Loss of Affordable Housing in New York City,” was based on a sample of 200 apartments in Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan and the Bronx. The Bushwick-based organization found that 45 percent had illegally high rents registered with the state Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), and one-third had missing years in their rent history. (Owners of rent-stabilized apartments must register their rents every year.) Not surprisingly, 60 percent of the apartments with gaps in their rent history also had illegally high rents.

“It ranges from small inflated rents to horror stories,” says Hilary Klein, lead organizer at Make the Road. Some of the tenants the group spoke to were charged more than \$10,000 in illegal increases, she says.

The number of apartments with fraudulent rents may be even higher, the report says, because in 12 percent of the units surveyed, “landlords failed to register any rents in recent years, making it impossible to determine the existence of rent fraud.” Also, it says, owners sometimes charge tenants more than the registered rent.

Housing advocates around the city say the report confirms what they’ve been seeing. “I’ve seen the same pattern for years and years,” says Ken Rosenfeld, head of the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation in Washington Heights. “I think this is just the tip of the iceberg.”

“There is a lot of fraud out there,” adds Ellen Davidson, an attorney in the Legal Aid Society’s housing-law reform unit.

Common practices the study found included landlords simply raising rents without any legal justification; failing to register the apartment’s rent; raising rents more than the 6 percent a year

permitted for major capital improvements; and inflating the costs of apartment renovations.

Fraudulent increases were most likely on vacant apartments, it said. New tenants rarely know what the apartment used to rent for, explains Make the Road staff attorney Marika Dias. In one Flushing apartment without any renovations, the rent was raised from \$909 a month to \$1,700 — more than \$500 over the legal increase — when a new tenant moved in in 2010.

WEAK ENFORCEMENT

The report harshly criticizes the Division of Housing and Community Renewal, the part of the state’s housing agency that oversees rents for the state’s 875,000 rent-stabilized apartments. The DHCR’s Office of Rent Administration handled fewer than 1,900 overcharge complaints in 2010, according to *The New York Times*. About 35 percent were settled in the tenant’s favor.

The biggest problem, the report and housing advocates say, is that the system is driven solely by tenant complaints, and the agency does not independently pursue possible fraud.

“Even when DHCR sees an outrageous overcharge, they never investigate the rest of the building,” says Ed Josephson, housing coordinator for Legal Services New York. “They see their mission as responding to tenant complaints.”

Many tenants do not even know that they can complain if they think their rent is illegally high, or they don’t know to go to DHCR. Others fear that their landlords will retaliate against them for filing a complaint. Official correspondence and signs in the agency’s office are

only in English, and tenants who speak Spanish or other foreign languages can rarely reach staff on the phone, the report says. And processing overcharge complaints takes a minimum of one year, usually 18 months. It can sometimes take more than two years.

The DHCR’s press office did not return phone calls.

PATTERNS OF FRAUD

The study was primarily based on apartments in Brooklyn and Queens, chosen to reflect the city’s mix of building sizes. The buildings “were not selected because we suspected rental overcharges,” it says. Make the Road then went door to door to find tenants willing to seek out their rent histories and supplemented that information with rent histories obtained by other community groups elsewhere in the city.

Maria de los Santos of Bushwick found out that she had been charged \$123 a month more than her legal rent for almost three years. The landlord did not register her apartment’s rent for the 12 years before she moved in, in 2005. It then retroactively registered a legal rent of \$900 — but by 2007, de los Santos was paying \$1,050. Though DHCR took more than a year to process her complaint, in March she won \$3,444 reimbursement and more than \$6,800 in damages.

Luis Pelaez of Jackson Heights, an Ecuadoran immigrant, was not so fortunate. He contacted Make the Road after he fell behind in his rent and got an eviction notice. His rent history revealed he had been overcharged more than \$9,000 after his landlord illegally raised the rent from \$1,139 to \$1,550 in 2006. However, he ran afoul of the “four-year rule,” the provision in the 1997 rent laws that largely prevents tenants from contesting overcharges more than four years old.

“By the time I found out I was being overcharged, it had been more than four years and I couldn’t do anything about it,” Pelaez said at a demonstration in Jackson Heights last winter. “But now my landlord will probably get away with overcharging me for years and he will probably win his case against me in Housing Court. There’s nothing I can do about it, and it’s very unfair.”

“There’s a lot of leeway for landlords who choose to do illegal things,” says Marika Dias. “If they can get away with it for four years, they’re home free. The exceptions are very small.”

State courts have carved out some exceptions to the four-year rule, primarily when tenants have evidence that an apartment was fraudulently deregulated. However, the issues remain murky, and the exceptions do not apply to apartments that are still rent-stabilized.

Robert McCreanor of the Catholic Migration Office’s Immigrant Tenant Advocacy Project in Sunnyside, Queens sees differ-

7 STEPS TO REPAIR DHCR

The NY State Division of Housing and Community Renewal has failed to protect tenants from rent-gouging landlords. Here are seven ways this could be changed:

- Move DHCR from a complaint-driven model to actively enforcing the rent laws.
- Investigate all rent increases on vacant apartments and all renewal increases above the city Rent Guidelines Board’s annual limits.
- Investigate rents in all apartments in a building where an overcharge is found and in all buildings owned by that landlord.
- Deny rent increases to landlords who do not register rents.
- Verify all increases for renovating individual apartments, a major source of fraud.
- Hire enough staff to do these investigations adequately, and hire more bilingual staff.
- Modernize computers to focus on “bad actors” and patterns of illegal behavior.

ent patterns of rent fraud. Small landlords, he says, are more likely to do “really egregious” things, such as simply raising the rent by \$200 every year. The bigger ones, such as the predatory-equity firms Pinnacle and Vantage, are more sophisticated, relying on inflating the costs of renovations.

“The larger and more professional the real-estate company, the less likely they are to just jack up the rents without doing something to cover their tracks,” says Ed Josephson. “We’ve seen buildings where they use the same receipts and the same checks for ten different apartments. It’s frequent that you see phony documents after you file an overcharge complaint.”

The Make the Road study did not include illegally deregulated apartments, although housing advocates say that fraud is especially rampant there. This kind of fraud — which particularly affects younger renters — is most difficult to track down, says Mario Mazzoni of the Metropolitan Council on Housing. Owners are not required to register rents once an apartment is deregulated, he explains, and, as tenants have no right to renew their leases, the landlord can easily retaliate if the tenant files an overcharge complaint.

WHO TO CALL

Do you suspect your rent has been illegally increased? To file a complaint with the Department of Housing and Community Renewal, call (718) 739-6400. For advice, call the Metropolitan Council on Housing’s tenant hotline at (212) 979-0611, Mon., Wed. or Fri. from 1:30-5 p.m.



MARLENA BUCZEK

Wait a Minute, Mr. Postmaster

POSTAL SERVICE PRIVATIZERS PUSH MANUFACTURED CRISIS

BY CHUCK ZLATKIN

From the wilds of Alaska to the high-rises of Manhattan, the U.S. Postal Service delivers an average of 563 million pieces of mail per day – or 40 percent of all the mail in the world. It's presence is so ubiquitous we hardly give it a second thought when a Netflix movie or a favorite magazine arrives, or when we send a first-class letter across the country for 44 cents, one-fifth what it costs to take the subway across town.

That could soon change.

The Postal Service is on the verge of financial collapse due to a congressionally manufactured funding crisis (more about that below) and its top leaders are intent on dismantling the agency's workforce and infrastructure. At stake is the nation's second largest civilian employer after Wal-Mart and the future of the universal service to which generations of Americans have become accustomed.

The Postal Service is looking to close 3,700 post offices nationwide in the coming months. By 2017, it would like to halve the 32,000 post offices it currently operates. Closings will be based on annual on-site revenues which means the large majority of closings will hit rural and low-income urban communities both of which tend to have a higher percentage of elderly residents for whom longer commutes to the post office can be especially burdensome. In New York City, 34 post offices are currently at risk including 17 in the Bronx as well as the lone post office that serves the 12,000 residents of Roosevelt Island.

Nationally, the Postal Service also plans to close or consolidate 313 out of its 487 mail processing plants by 2013, which means it will take longer for mail to be delivered.

Here in New York, the mail processing plant at the Bronx General Post Office at Grand Concourse and 149th Street faces being closed, which would eliminate 320 living wage jobs. Once processing is halted in the Bronx, mail will be trucked to a facility in Chelsea. The Postal Service contends that there will be no reduction in prompt mail delivery to the residents of the Bronx. This defies common sense as many of the trucks going to Chelsea and returning to the Bronx will be traveling during some of the most congested times of day.

REDUCED SERVICE

Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe is pushing to reduce service from six days a week to five. This will harm people who most rely on postal delivery – small businesses, rural people, elderly waiting to receive medications, entrepreneurs handling online orders. It's likely a private company would be granted a permit to deliver mail on a non-delivery day at zoned prices that will cost most people far more than they currently pay.

This is part of a larger effort to privatize and outsource as many functions of the Postal Service as possible. The Postal Service already out sources \$12 billion a year in business to corporations such FedEx (\$1.37 billion in 2010), Northrop Grumman (\$494 million) and UPS (\$95 million).



BIG MISTAKE: "They picked the wrong one to close," said Mario Rivera, 50, who regularly uses the post office by Yankee Stadium.

Fatally weakening a \$67 billion per year entity like the Postal Service is more than a business opportunity for corporate America. For the right wing, it is an opportunity to show that government can play no positive function in our lives even though the Post Office has been a huge success since it was founded in 1775 by the Second Continental Congress. It is also a chance to launch another attack on unions as the postal service is one of the last sectors of the economy that is still heavily unionized.

ANTI-WORKER

Postmaster Donahoe has announced plans to reduce the post office workforce from the current 570,000 workers to about 350,000 workers in 2015 using a combination of attrition and layoffs. This comes only four months after postal workers signed a new five-year contract that provided the Postal Service \$4 billion in savings in return for a no-layoffs pledge. During a time where politicians from both parties talk about their desire to create jobs, carrying out mass layoffs in the Postal Service is unconscionable.

The Postal Service has incurred \$20 billion in losses during the past four years and is on the brink of insolvency. Conventional wisdom holds that the agency's troubles are due to email, too many post offices, unnecessary six-day delivery, overpaid and

The Postal Service is considering closing more than 3,700 post offices across the country, including 34 in New York City, under rules that require individual postal stations to meet annual revenue quotas or face being shut down. The impact would be felt most heavily in low-income urban and rural communities.

THIRTY-FOUR POST OFFICES TO CLOSE IN NEW YORK CITY

BRONX - 17

HUNTS POINT BRONX 10474
MELCOURT BRONX 10451
MORRISANIA BRONX 10456
STADIUM BRONX 10452
UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS BRONX 10452
WEST FARMS BRONX 10460
BOTANICAL BRONX 10458
CRANFORD BRONX 10470
FIELDSTON BRONX 10463
SPUYTEN DUYVIL BRONX 10463
VAN COTT BRONX 10467
CASTLE HILL BRONX 10462
CLASON POINT BRONX 10473
DREISER LOOP BRONX 10475
EINSTEIN BRONX 10475
ESPLANADE BRONX 10469
HILLSIDE BRONX 10469

BROOKLYN - 5

RESTORATION PLAZA BROOKLYN 11216
MUNICIPAL FINANCE BROOKLYN 11201
SUNSET BROOKLYN 11220
OVINGTON BROOKLYN 11220
BRIGHTON FINANCE BROOKLYN 11235

MANHATTAN - 6

ROOSEVELT ISLAND NEW YORK 10044
COLLEGE STATION NEW YORK 10030
FORT WASHINGTON NEW YORK 10032
26 FEDERAL PLAZA STATION NEW YORK 10278
APPRAISERS STORES NEW YORK 10036
PORT AUTHORITY NEW YORK 10011

QUEENS - 5

GRAND ASTORIA 11103
HOLLISWOOD HOLLIS 11423
ROSEDALE ROSEDALE 11422
ARVERNE ARVERNE 11692
ROCKAWAY BEACH ROCKAWAY BEACH 11693

STATEN ISLAND - 1

ELTINGVILLE FINANCE STATEN ISLAND 10312



CLOSED FOR BUSINESS: Alvin Keitt, a 62-year-old Bronx resident from Highbridge, drops his mail in a mailbox since Post Office was closed on Saturday due to cutbacks in service.

The Post Office— You Can Bank On It

BY ANN SCHNEIDER

One way to prevent the bankruptcy of the U.S. Postal Service would be to restore the postal savings system that was established in 1910 as a means for small depositors to have safe, no-cost access to savings accounts until it was abolished in 1966.

Postal savings systems are common in Europe, Canada and South Africa. Until they were privatized in a recent wave of free market fundamentalism, England and Japan had the most successful systems, with Japan Post holding about one-third of all personal savings in the country, amounting

to \$2.9 trillion in 25,000 branches. Japan used those governmental deposits to support its transport projects, social programs and military.

In the United States, demand for a postal savings system was a central request of the 1892 Populist Party during the era of Williams Jennings Bryan and the agrarian movement, whose organizations demanded land, credit and transportation reform to protect farmers from being gouged by the owners of banks, railroads and grain elevators. However, it took 80 attempts to get legislation through Congress and the Panics of 1893 and 1907 before the Democrats and Republicans finally climbed on the band-

wagon.

A 1910 Act of Congress established the postal savings system as a self-sustaining entity, paying depositors 2 percent interest and re-depositing the funds in banks at 2.5 percent interest to pay for the cost of operating 8,141 post office branches, all of which accepted deposits. The Act also required the U.S. Postal Service to keep a 5 percent reserve in the U.S. Treasury and to invest the money in local banks in order to maintain access to capital in rural areas.

Customers who were traditionally barred from banking — including children as young as ten years old and married women — could establish their own savings ac-

counts with a minimum deposit of \$1 and accrue a maximum balance of \$500 (later raised to \$2,500 in 1918.) To save up the initial \$1, customers were given cards on which they could affix 10 cent postage stamps. Without ever advertising its services, the postal savings system nonetheless peaked in 1947 with almost \$3.4 billion in deposits. However, by 1964 Postal Service savings had declined to \$416 million due, in part, to commercial banks offering customers higher interest rates. The program was officially terminated by Congress in 1966. Lawmakers claimed that the availability of

Continued on page 6

Looking For a Mailbox in the Bronx



LIZ BORDA

Papanini Hamadou, 45, complained that closing the post office in the Melrose section of the Bronx would turn a walk down the street into a commute across the borough. “Me, I live on this block,” said Hamadou. “It was easy for me. But if they close I have to go to Grand Concourse. I have to take a bus.”



Yolanda Feliciano, 42, points out that the cuts in postal services in the Bronx will only make a bad situation worse. “It’s bad enough we don’t have mail slots. They have one around the corner and they rarely pick up the mail. This is where we drop off our mail,” said Feliciano, referring to the soon-to-be-closed Melcourt station on Melrose Ave. in the Bronx.



Mike Folkes, 64, who lives in the Highbridge section of the Bronx, wanted to drop off mail at the Yankee Stadium post office when he discovered the station had eliminated Saturday service. He headed to the Melcourt postal service station, only to discover that it had also stopped offering weekend service. “I have to send these letters today,” said Folkes. “I don’t like it. Especially because I had to come all the way here on a Saturday and it is not open.”

Economy Connection

Speakers & Resources on Political Economics

a project of the *Union for Radical Political Economics*



Has the economy been mystifying you lately?

We can provide a speaker for a political or educational event, or someone to discuss economic questions informally with members of your community organization, union or political group, or in your classroom. Our members speak and write about a wide range of domestic and international issues. Contact us and we will find someone who is right for you!

Economy Connection
(201) 792-7459 • soapbox@comcast.net
www.urpe.org/ec/echome

URPE National Office, Gordon Hall, #207, UMass
418 North Pleasant St., Amherst, MA 01002-1735
tel: (413) 577-0806 • fax: (413) 577-0261
URPE@labornet.org • <http://www.urpe.org>

THE INDYPENDENT



JOIN ME IN BECOMING A REGULAR DONOR TO THE INDYPENDENT. It takes money to create media where we can discuss, debate and analyze events such as the historic uprisings from the Middle East to the Midwest.

Most important, by building a project like *The Indypendent* that helps build the Left, we are expressing the type of collective action we need to forge a new future.

—STANLEY ARONOWITZ

YES! I WANT TO SUPPORT THE INDYPENDENT!

I would like to become a monthly sustainer:

☐ \$5 ☐ \$10 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ OTHER: \$ _____

I would like to make a one-time contribution:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$150 ☐ OTHER: \$ _____

If you become a sustainer or contribute \$100 or more, you also receive a one-year subscription to *The Indypendent*. (A one-year subscription of 16 issues is \$29.)

I am paying by:

☐ Check ☐ Cash ☐ Credit Card

Shipping Address:

Full Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

CREDIT CARD:

Type (Mastercard, Visa or American Express): _____

CC Number: _____

Security Code: _____

Expiration Date: _____

Billing Address (if different than above):



All your information is kept strictly confidential. We will only email or call if we have a problem fulfilling your donation.

Postmaster

Continued from page 4

underproductive workers. Unfortunately, these are half-truths, misinformation or outright lies.

The root cause of the financial distress that the Postal Service is going through is overwhelmingly caused by Congressional mandates that were imposed upon the Postal Service. Under the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA) of 2006, the Postal Service is required to fully pre-fund future retiree health benefits for the next 75 years, and to do it within a ten-year window. This means the Postal Service is required to send to the U. S. Treasury \$5.5 billion each Sept. 30 to pay for the future retirement health benefits of people who haven't even been born yet. No other government agency, corporation or organization is required to fully pre-fund future retirees' health benefits. If not for the PAEA, the Postal Service would be functioning fine even with the impact of email and the financial collapse of 2008.

But that is not the worst of it. Both the Postal Service's Office of Inspector General (OIG) and the independent Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) commissioned audits to look into possible overpayments that the Postal Service has made into the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). Both audits show that the Postal Service has overpaid at least \$50 billion into the pension fund over the past several decades.

A VIABLE SOLUTION

There is a piece of legislation, H.R. 1351, introduced by Stephen Lynch (D-MA) which calls upon the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to do an audit to determine the definitive amount of the overpayments to CSRS and transfer that amount to the future retirees' health care funding. Basically, it is a bookkeeping adjustment that saves the Postal Service billions and does not cost American taxpayers any money at all. The measure has 216 co-sponsors including two dozen Republicans.

On Sept. 27, postal workers and their allies held rallies in every congressional district in the country to urge Congress to pass H.R. 1351 and preserve the postal service as a public institution that serves all Americans equally.

The Postal Service can continue to fulfill its mandate to provide universal service and not have to close post offices, processing plants, cutting a day of delivery or reducing its work force by 220,000 people in the midst of a recession. Once the Congress solves the problem it created we can then need to turn our focus to the real problems that people face rather than this artificially created one that was supposed to doom the Postal Service.

Chuck Zlatkin has been a postal worker for 33 years. He is the legislative and political director of the New York Metro Area Postal Union, the largest local in the American Postal Workers Union (awpu.org). For more information, see savethepostoffice.com.

Bank On It

Continued from page 7

FDIC insurance and "the proven reform of the banking system" rendered Postal Service savings accounts unnecessary.

But since the 2008 financial meltdown, groups from all sides of the political spectrum — from National Review and the Minnesota Grad School of Business Administration professors to the New American Foundation — have advocated to bring back the postal savings system. New American Foundation's Michael Lind views it as a curative against the consolidation of the banking and financial industry after the bailout, as well as a way to modernize roads, power grids and sewage systems. The Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, an arm of the World Bank, says there are currently 60 million Americans who remain "underbanked."

There are now 32,714 U.S. Postal branches around the country, and many are in danger of being closed. With banking fees reaching a record high, there are millions of consumers who could benefit from free Postal Service savings accounts, even if interest is reduced to 1 percent. Commercial banks charged customers \$39 billion in fees in 2009, including ATM and overdraft fees and monthly maintenance costs. A 2008 FDIC study found that overdraft charges comprise 74 percent of bank fees on deposit accounts.

Since the banking industry continues to spend its bailout money to lobby Congress against requiring it to offer safe consumer financial products, reviving postal savings accounts would restore competitiveness to the market for bank customers — not to mention protecting low-wage earners from the predations of payday lenders and credit card companies. It would also be a way to buy down America's debt.

Public Sector Attacks Undermine Racial Progress

By YVONNE YEN LIU

In March 1968 Martin Luther King, Jr. traveled to Memphis, Tenn. to support 1,300 striking sanitation workers who toiled for poverty wages in horrendous working conditions. Following King’s assassination there on April 4, the workers won legal recognition for their union.

Their victory was a landmark in the struggle of Blacks to reap the economic benefits of the civil rights movement. However, the modest gains that followed in the ensuing decades for some middle and working-class Blacks have been dramatically eroded in the past decade by a wave of home foreclosures and an official unemployment rate of 16.7 percent — a trend made worse by recent attacks on public sector workers and the services they provide.

Such is the case in New York, where Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the City Council reached a budget deal in June that included layoffs of a thousand city workers. Most belong to District Council 37 whose membership is majority Black and Latino. The layoffs of school aides, parent coordinators and other non-teaching personnel, some of whom earn as little as \$11,000 a year, are slated to begin Oct. 7.

The hardest-hit schools will be in poor, predominantly people-of-color neighborhoods like Washington Heights, Harlem, East New York and East Flatbush while middle class neighborhoods in South Brooklyn and Staten Island will be barely affected, according to a report by Juan Gonzalez of the *New York Daily News*.

Similar developments have unfolded across the country as politicians and the media blame teachers, nurses, bus drivers, letter carriers, social workers and other public servants earning living wages and pensions for budget shortfalls.

The undertone of this slash-and-burn approach is racialized. As my colleague at Colorlines.com, Kai Wright, wrote earlier this year, the widespread images of public employees as lazy and overpaid have “the faint outline of familiar caricatures — welfare queens, Cadillacs in the projects, Mexican freeloaders.”

Of course, not all 21 million public employees are equal. The United States has a vast repressive apparatus composed of hundreds of thousands of federal, state, county and local police and prison guards, most of whom are white and male. They have endured far fewer layoffs and have not been vilified like public workers who provide so-

cial services. This is because the right opposes downward redistribution of wealth and power but sees the repressive work of the police as a vital legitimate public function.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The public sector has historically bolstered families of color, in particular Black workers, both through social services and as a source of employment.

UC Berkeley labor policy analyst Steven Pitts found in a recent study that the public sector was “the single most important source of employment” for Blacks, who were 30 percent more likely to be employed as a government worker than any other race. Black workers in the public sector also earn wages comparable to what white workers earn, reducing the racial wage gap that plagues most occupations.

Equal employment opportunity guidelines and affirmative action mandates ensure that government employers seek out qualified people of color for the public sector. This offers a level of accountability not possible in the private sector. When the public sector swelled under programs created during the New Deal and the Great Society, so did employment of workers of color. By the 1960s unions recognized the demographic change in the public sector and embraced Blacks as members, ensuring that they earned living wages and supporting benefits.

With an unionization rate that hovered just above 35 percent, the public sector continued to be a source of good, union jobs in the last few decades even as manufacturing jobs moved abroad and union density in the private sector fell below 10 percent by 1997. Now, that is changing. In 2010, state and local governments slashed over 230,000 jobs. Expect more in 2011 and 2012.

WAR ON THE POOR

This is a far cry from Dr. King’s vision of bringing “colored peoples of the world out of their long years of poverty, their long years of hurt and neglect.” In fact, negotiations

over the next decade of budgeting amount to a war on people of color. The congressional debt ceiling “crisis” that was resolved in August was a manufactured affair that allowed both parties to justify almost \$1 trillion in spending cuts in the next 10 years. This will devastate millions dependent on a tattered social safety net. The budget deal also created a bipartisan super committee tasked with

- 290,000 low-income families losing rental vouchers
- 300,000 to 450,000 low-income mothers and children losing Women, Infants and Children (WIC) food subsidies
- 3.5 million low-income households losing assistance for heating their homes
- 1.4 million students won’t receive Pell grants.



Census data shows that the past 10 years have been a “lost decade” in terms of livelihood and gains for working families. More than 46 million families live in poverty in this country now, a disproportionate number of them Black. Black families in poverty increased to almost 30 percent and over one-third of Black and Latino children are impoverished. We are further than ever from the “promised land” King spoke of on the last night of his life. But, we have the means to do something about it.

The percentage of taxes paid by corporations and the super-rich are at their lowest in decades while income inequality has soared to levels not seen since the 1920s. That hoarded wealth should be taxed in order to rebuild the public sector and create a 21st century equivalent of FDR’s Civilian Conservation Corps to give work to millions who need it. Even the International Monetary Fund now acknowledges that austerity measures exacerbate the recession while government spending provides stimulus.

Redistribution of wealth is the starting point for any real solution to the recession and for bridging the racial economic divide that grows more extreme

each day. reaching a so-called “grand bargain” that could exact trillions more dollars in cuts to social spending during the next decade.

The often mystifying numbers tossed around in the deficit reduction debate become clearer when translated in terms of the people who will be impacted. This year, the Coalition on Human Needs estimated the cuts would result in:

Yvonne Yen Liu is a senior research associate at the Applied Research Center and a contributing writer at Colorlines.com.

WHERE DO I GET MY COPY OF THE INDYPENDENT ?

BELOW 14TH ST.

WBAI - 99.5FM

120 Wall St., 10th floor

DC 37 Headquarters

125 Barclay St.

Bluestockings

172 Allen St.

Kate's Joint

58 Ave. B

Housing Works

126 Crosby St.

Hudson Park Library

66 Leroy St.

Seward Park Library

192 East Broadway at Jefferson St.

Whole Earth Bakery

130 St. Mark's Pl.

Mamoun's Falafel Restaurant

22 St. Mark's Pl.

Brecht Forum

451 West St.

Shakespeare Books

716 Broadway at Washington Pl.

Theater for the New City

155 First Ave.

14TH TO 96TH ST.

Epiphany Library

228 E. 23rd St.

Chelsea Square Restaurant

W. 23rd St. & 9th Ave.

Manhattan Neighborhood Network

537 W. 59th St.

Muhlenberg Library

209 W. 23rd St.

St. Agnes Library

444 Amsterdam Ave. (btwn W. 81st and 82nd Sts.)

ABOVE 96TH ST.

George Bruce Library

518 W. 125th St.

Book Culture

526 W. 112th St.

Morningside Heights Library

2900 Broadway

Harlem Library

9 W. 124th St.

Hamilton Grange Library

503 W. 145th St.

Uptown Sister's Books

W. 156th St. & Amsterdam

Bloomingdale Library

150 W. 100th St.

BROOKLYN

Brooklyn Museum

200 Eastern Pkwy.

BAM

30 Lafayette Ave.

Tillie's of Brooklyn

248 DeKalb Ave.

Tea Lounge

Union St. & Seventh Ave.

Video Gallery

310 Seventh Ave.

Ozzie's Coffee Shop

249 5th Ave.

57 Seventh Ave.

Verb Café

Bedford Ave. & N. 5th St.

Pillow Café

505 Myrtle Ave.

Sisters Community Hardware

900 Fulton St.

Pacific Street Library

25 Fourth Ave.

K-Dog & Dune Buggy

43 Lincoln Rd.

Maybelle's Cafe

502 Henry St.

Outpost Café

1014 Fulton St.

Blackbird Café

197 Bedford Ave.

'sNice Café

315 Fifth Ave.

High Bridge Library

78 168th St. & Woodcrest Ave.

Bedford Library

496 Franklin Ave.

Parkside Deli

203 Parkside Ave.

BRONX

Brook Park

141st St. & Brook Ave.

Mott Haven Library

321 E. 140th St.

High Bridge Library

78 W. 168th St.

Mi Casa Bakery

18 E. Bedford Park Blvd.

STATEN ISLAND

St. George Library Center

5 Central Ave.

Port Richmond Library

75 Bennett St.

Dot Com Cafe

36 Bay St.

Everything Goes Book Café

208 Bay St.

A FREE PAPER
FOR FREE PEOPLE

Phone: 212-221-0521

E-mail: contact@indypendent.org

Join us for a day of collective thinking about the challenges facing public higher education. Turn this time of disinvestment into an opportunity to build hope and activism for the future.



defending PUBLIC HigherEd

Graduate Center
Elebash Recital Hall
365 Fifth Ave.

Fri. Oct. 7
8:30am - 3:30pm

This conference is sponsored and organized by faculty, staff, and students at the CUNY Graduate Center and the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY and is FREE and open to all!

defendpubhied@gmail.com

FRANK MAURO • GARY RHOADES • BARBARA BOWEN • FRANCES FOX PIVEN • ANTONIA LEVY
Exec. Dir., Fiscal Policy Inst. Fmr. Gen. Sect'y, AAUP President, PSC/CUNY Distinguished Professor, CUNY Doctoral Student in Sociology

Registration: defendingpublichighereducation.commonsgc.cuny.edu

HEALTHCARE-NOW! NYC

UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE CAN NEW YORK STATE ACHIEVE IT?

Wednesday, October 5th at 7:30pm
at Church of the Ascension • 221 W. 107th Street
(between Broadway and Amsterdam)

Healthcare-NOW! NYC
invites you to a symposium

FEATURING

Hon. Richard N. Gottfried,
Chair, NYS Assembly Health Committee
Author of A7860 & S5425
New York State's
Single-Payer Bill

PANELISTS

Laura Boylan, M.D.
Clinical Associate Prof.,
NYU School of Medicine

Laurie Wen,
Executive Director,
Physicians for a National
Health Program-NY Metro

Katie Robbins,
National Organizer,
Healthcare-NOW!

THIS EVENT IS ENDORSED BY:

NEW YORK STATE NURSES ASSOCIATION
COMMUNICATION WORKERS OF AMERICA
LABOR CAMPAIGN FOR SINGLE PAYER
PHYSICIANS FOR A NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM-NY METRO
THEATRICAL STAGE EMPLOYEES LOCAL 1 IATSE

SINGLE-PAYER • HEALTHCARE IS A HUMAN RIGHT • MEDICARE FOR ALL



Healthcare-NOW! NYC
hcn.nyc@gmail.com
hcn-nyc.org

THE INDYPENDENT
PUTTING TOGETHER
A GREAT EVENT FOR
YOUR COMMUNITY?
SUBMIT THE
DETAILS TO
INDYEVENTS@
GMAIL.COM AND
WE'LL HELP YOU
SPREAD THE WORD!

Change the World, Occupy That Square

BY COSTAS PANAYOTAKIS

As the four-year-long global capitalist crisis deepens, social protest and turmoil are spreading. From the Arab world, Israel and Europe to Chile, the French Caribbean and increasingly the United States, demonstrations, strikes, riots and occupations of public squares are the order of the day.

The triggers for and demands of the protests reflect the specific conditions within each country, but the movements also exhibit a growing realization that the neoliberal socio-economic model is bankrupt even as it continues to subordinate national politics to the dictates of capital.

It is easy to dismiss this democratic upsurge as it has been unable to prevent the further consolidation of the neoliberal policies responsible for the present crisis. The resilience of capitalist elites seems especially surprising given the commonly held

has made more urgent than ever. A key element of this historic moment is the tactic of occupying public space in general and public squares in particular. It is a tactic that has captured the world's imagination ever since the mobilization of ordinary Egyptians in Cairo's Tahrir square played an important role in toppling President Hosni Mubarak.

Social protest through the occupation of public squares challenges how capital uses public space. Cities and communities successfully integrate themselves into the circuits of capital by branding the local to appeal to foreign investors.

Consequently, the disruptive power of occupying central or iconic places grows. This is especially so as globalization increases the economic importance of tourism in places as distant from each other as Cairo, Athens, London and New York. (For example, the 48.7 million tourists who swarmed over New York in 2010 came to consume Macy's and Broadway, Chinatown and Museum



ALEX KRALES

belief that this crisis would spell the end of free-market orthodoxy. This resilience is matched by the inability of traditional left politics to turn the current crisis into an opportunity to challenge the increasingly evident irrationality and injustice of the global capitalist system.

A case can be made for such a pessimistic diagnosis. After the initial successes of the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt, the traditional forces of order have regained their footing by resorting to brutal domestic repression and foreign military intervention, as in Bahrain and Libya. Meanwhile, the brief turn of Western governments to mild Keynesian stimulus programs has given way to harsh austerity programs. The elite consensus is that the general populace must pay for deficit reduction, even though the deficits were a direct product of both the crisis itself and the lavish bailouts for the financial sector that precipitated the crisis.

And yet there is another side to this story. The planetary wave of protests also points beyond neoliberalism and toward the renewal of left politics that capitalism's deepening social, economic and ecological crises

Mile.) By contrast, the transformation of public squares into the locus of regular general assemblies open to all affirms that public space should be subject to the principle of democracy and the wishes of the many rather than the single-minded pursuit of profit by the privileged few.

Occupied and self-organized squares are also living examples of the principle that "another world is possible." They are islands that obey a logic radically different from their surroundings. I experienced this last summer in Athens, where the central Syntagma square became a site of direct democracy that was a jarring contrast to a delegitimized parliament, hated banks, the obligatory McDonald's and the luxury hotels hosting the foreign diplomats and technocrats who dictate the austerity policies that turn life into hell thereby driving Greeks into the streets.

The powers-that-be are keenly aware of the subversive power of such exhilaration and this is why the state in Egypt, Spain, Greece, New York and elsewhere has

Continued on page 15

ANTI-AUSTERITY AND THE PUBLIC SPACE

Dec. 17, 2010 A produce vendor and his family's breadwinner since childhood, 26-year-old Mohammed Bouazizi sets himself on fire after years of petty police harassment in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia. His act sets off a wave of protests for democracy and opposing corruption against the autocratic regime of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali.

Jan. 14, 2011 After 23 years in power, Ben Ali is forced to dissolve parliament and then flees to Saudi Arabia. The success of the uprising inspires pro-democracy activists in other countries to confront their autocratic rulers in what becomes known as the Arab Spring. In Tunisia, the main square in the capital of Tunis, which was the site of massive protests against Ben Ali, is renamed after Bouazizi.

Jan. 25, 2011 Using everything from canvassing and flyering to social networking and citizen-made media, organizers begin an 18-day non-stop protest in Cairo's Tahrir Square. By the third day violence by the regime's thugs and the blocking of internet traffic inspire hundreds of thousands of Egyptians to join protests and swing world opinion against President Hosni Mubarak's dictatorial government.



FLICKR.COM/SALLAM

Jan. 27, 2011 More than 16,000 protesters flood into the public squares of Sanaa, Yemen to demand an end to the rule of Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has ruled over Yemen almost uninterrupted since 1978. Pro-democracy demonstrators set up camp in University Square, renaming it At-Taghir (Change Square), which eventually turns into a battlefield for pro- and anti-government protesters.

Feb. 11, 2011 After three decades in power Hosni Mubarak resigns. Less than six months later he is shown to the world clad in prison garb, lying on a hospital bed in a cage on trial for corruption and unlawful killings.



FLICKR.COM/MALYOUSIF

Feb. 14, 2011 Internet-savvy activists organize rallies across Bahrain demanding equal rights for the oppressed Shia majority and an end to government corruption. Tens of thousands turn out in the capital of Manama alone, rallying in Pearl Circle. The same day protests begin government forces attack, killing seven protesters in a few days. At one point more than 200,000 join in demonstrations, more than one-third of the country's population.

Feb. 15, 2011 Thousands of Wisconsinites set up a protest encampment inside the state capitol in Madison to protest Republican Gov. Scott Walker's austerity budget and his attack on collective bargaining. The state capitol occupation lasts for almost three weeks and ignites pro-union demonstrations of upwards of 100,000 people.

March 13, 2011 As Bahraini groups expand their calls for equality into calls for general democracy, the royal family endorses an invasion of military forces from Saudi Arabia and neighboring countries to crush the pro-democracy uprising. Dozens of protesters are killed or disappeared,

while many prominent organizers are jailed and tortured.

March 30, 2011 Hundreds of protesters from several New York City-based community organizations occupy the state capitol through the night as legislators work behind closely guarded doors to approve an austerity budget that enacts billions of dollars in spending cuts while allowing a millionaire's tax to expire.



FLICKR.COM/FOTOGRAFAR

May 15, 2011 Over 1,000 youth, dubbed *los indignados* (the indignant), begin an encampment in Puerta del Sol, Madrid's central square. Another 30,000 supporters gather in the square for a series of mass assemblies that put forward popular demands that include a greater say in the political process and an end to the austerity measures enacted by the Spanish government.

June 14, 2011 Dozens of anti-austerity protesters begin a three-week around-the-clock protest near New York City's City Hall Park, renaming it Bloombergville. Their demands include an end to the severe cuts to public services at the city and state level.



FLICKR.COM/JESSIEEEDER

Sept. 17, 2011 After a call from the Canadian magazine *AdBusters* and web activists Anonymous for an occupation of Wall Street in protest of corporate influence in the political process, nearly 2,000 people rally. They march from Bowling Green and set up camp in Zuccotti Park, just north of the New York Stock Exchange, renaming it Liberty Plaza. On the same day in Poland's capital, an estimated crowd of more than 20,000 people protests a conference of European Union finance ministers reportedly called to plan austerity measures for the Euro Zone.

Oct. 6, 2011 Thousands plan to occupy Washington, D.C.'s Freedom Plaza demanding that after 10 years of war U.S. military forces be withdrawn from Afghanistan. Organizers demand that hundreds of billions slated for the ongoing war be diverted to "human needs and environmental protection."

—Manny Jalonschi

The Revolution Begins at Home

AN OPEN LETTER TO JOIN THE WALL STREET OCCUPATION

By ARUN GUPTA

What is occurring on Wall Street right now is truly remarkable. For over 10 days, in the sanctum of the great cathedral of global capitalism, the dispossessed have liberated territory from the financial overlords and their police army.

They have created a unique opportunity to shift the tides of history in the tradition of other great peaceful occupations from the sit-down strikes of the 1930s to the lunch-counter sit-ins of the 1960s to the democratic uprisings across the Arab world and Europe today.

While the Wall Street occupation is growing, it needs an all-out commitment from everyone who cheered the Egyptians in Tahrir Square, said “We are all Wisconsin,” and stood in solidarity with the Greeks and Spaniards. This is a movement for anyone who lacks a job, housing or healthcare, or thinks they have no future.

Our system is broken at every level. More than 25 million Americans are unemployed. More than 50 million live without health insurance. And perhaps 100 million Americans are mired in poverty, using realistic measures. Yet the fat cats continue to get tax breaks and reap billions while politicians compete to turn the austerity screws on all of us.

At some point the number of people occupying Wall Street — whether that’s 5,000, 10,000 or 50,000 — will force the powers that be to offer concessions. No one can say how many people it will take or even how things will change exactly, but there is a real potential for bypassing a corrupt political process and to begin realizing a society based on human needs — not hedge fund profits.

After all, who would have imagined a year ago that Tunisians and Egyptians would oust their dictators?

At Liberty Plaza, the nerve center of the occupation, more than 1,000 people gather every day to debate, discuss and organize what to do about our failed system that has allowed the 400 richest Americans at the top to amass more wealth than the 180 million Americans at the bottom.

It’s astonishing that this self-organized festival of democracy has sprouted on the turf of the masters of the universe, the men who play the tune that both political parties and the media dance to. The New York Police Department, which has deployed hundreds of officers at a time to surround and intimidate protest-

ers, is capable of arresting everyone and clearing Liberty Plaza in minutes. But they haven’t, which is also astonishing.

That’s because assaulting peaceful crowds in a public square demanding real democracy — economic and not just political — would remind the world of the brittle autocrats who brutalized their people demanding justice before they were swept away by the Arab Spring. And the state violence

has already backfired. After police attacked a Saturday afternoon march that started from Liberty Plaza the crowds only got bigger and media interest grew.

The Wall Street occupation has already succeeded in revealing the bankruptcy of the dominant powers — the economic, the political, media and security forces. They have nothing positive to offer humanity, not that they ever did for the Global South, but now their quest for endless profits means deepening the misery with a thousand austerity cuts.

Even their solutions are cruel jokes. They tell us that the “Buffett Rule” would spread the pain by asking the penthouse set to sacrifice a tin of caviar, which is what the proposed tax increase would amount to. Meanwhile, the rest of us will have to sacrifice healthcare, food, education, housing, jobs and perhaps our lives to sate the ferocious appetite of capital.

That’s why more and more people are joining the Wall Street occupation. They can tell you about their homes being foreclosed upon, months of grinding unemployment or minimum-wage dead-end jobs, staggering student debt loads, or trying to live without decent healthcare. It’s a whole generation of Americans with no prospects, but who are told to believe in a system that can only offer them *Dancing With The Stars* and pepper spray to the face.

Yet against every description of a generation derided as narcissistic, apathetic and hopeless they are staking a claim to a better future for all of us.

That’s why we all need to join in. Not just by liking it on Facebook, signing a petition at change.org or retweeting protest photos, but by going down to the occupation itself.

There is great potential here. Sure, it’s a far cry from Tahrir Square or even Wisconsin. But there is the nucleus of a revolt that could shake America’s power structure as much as the Arab world has been upended.

Instead of 1,000 to 2,000 people a day joining in the occu-

pation there needs to be tens of thousands of people protesting the fat cats driving Bentleys and drinking \$1,000 bottles of champagne with money they looted from the financial crisis and then from the bailouts while Americans literally die on the streets.

To be fair, the scene in Liberty Plaza seems messy and chaotic. But it’s also a laboratory of possibility, and that’s the beauty of democracy. As opposed to our monoculture world, where political life is flipping a lever every four years, social life is being a consumer and economic life is being a timid cog, the Wall Street occupation is creating a polyculture of ideas, expression and art.

Yet while many people support the occupation, they hesitate to fully join in and are quick to offer criticism. It’s clear that the biggest obstacles to building a powerful movement are not the police or capital — it’s our own cynicism and despair.

Perhaps their views were colored by *The New York Times* article deriding protestors for wishing to “pantomime progressivism” and “gunning for Wall Street with faulty aim.” Many of the criticisms boil down to “a lack of clear messaging.”

But what’s wrong with that? A fully formed movement is not going to spring from the ground. It has to be created. And who can say what exactly needs to be done? We are not talking about ousting a dictator; though some say we want to oust the dictatorship of capital.

There are plenty of sophisticated ideas out there: end corporate personhood; institute a “Tobin Tax” on stock purchases and currency trading; na-

tionalize banks; socialize medicine; fully fund government jobs and genuine Keynesian stimulus; lift restrictions on labor organizing; allow cities to turn foreclosed homes into public housing; build a green energy infrastructure.

But how can we get broad agreement on any of these? If the protesters came into the square with a pre-determined set of demands it would have only limited their potential. They would have either been dismissed as pie in the sky — such as socialized medicine or nationalize banks — or if they went for weak demands such as the Buffett Rule their efforts would immediately be absorbed by a failed political system, thus undermining the movement.

That’s why the building of the movement has to go hand in hand with common struggle, debate and radical democracy. It’s how we will create genuine solutions that have legiti-

macy. And that is what is occurring down at Wall Street.

Now, there are endless objections one can make. But if we focus on the possibilities, and shed our despair, our hesitancy and our cynicism, and collectively come to Wall Street with critical thinking, ideas and solidarity we can change the world.

How many times in your life do you get a chance to watch history unfold, to actively participate in building a better society, to come together with thousands of people where genuine democracy is the reality and not a fantasy?

For too long our minds have been chained by fear, by division, by impotence. The one thing the elite fear most is a great awakening. That day is here. Together we can seize it.



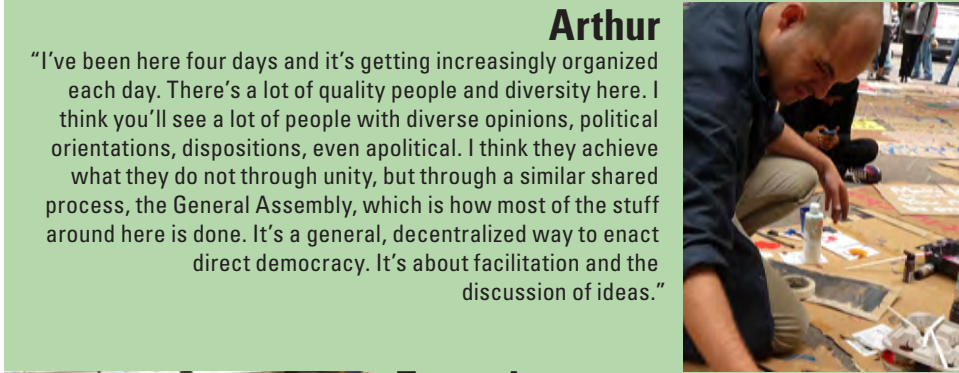
VOICES FROM AN OCCUPATION

by Manny Jalonschi

While the slant of corporate media coverage of the Wall Street Occupation has focused on the general motivations behind the movement, often missed are the variety of personal perspectives, backgrounds and desires that brought this protest-city together. Here are some of the many voices that have combined their efforts to bring New York City the Wall Street live-in protest.



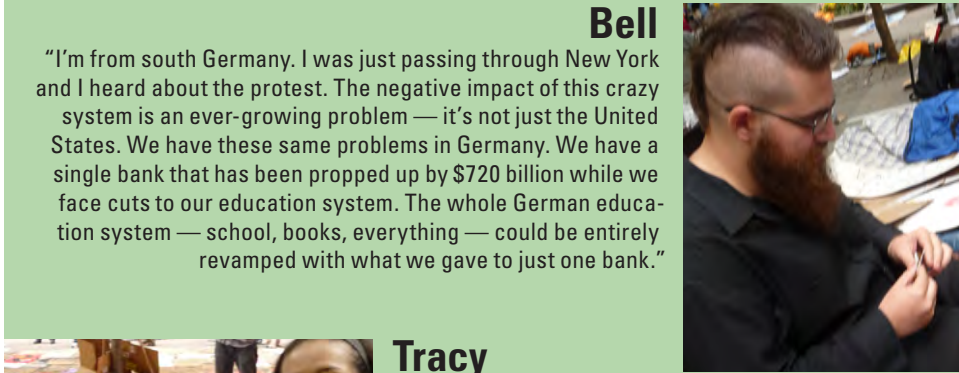
Julian
“I’m from Oregon. Saw it on the internet, decided to come out here and bought a one-way ticket. I’ve been here two days. In the past I’ve done some forest-related activism in Oregon, but I was so excited about this because it was out here, on Wall Street, to identify and call out the injustices. I love the consensus-based system for us to develop a vision of where we want to take society, for us to interact with each other and identify the problems. I see us as a part of the larger global movement. Capitalism is in crisis, both here and abroad.”



Arthur
“I’ve been here four days and it’s getting increasingly organized each day. There’s a lot of quality people and diversity here. I think you’ll see a lot of people with diverse opinions, political orientations, dispositions, even apolitical. I think they achieve what they do not through unity, but through a similar shared process, the General Assembly, which is how most of the stuff around here is done. It’s a general, decentralized way to enact direct democracy. It’s about facilitation and the discussion of ideas.”



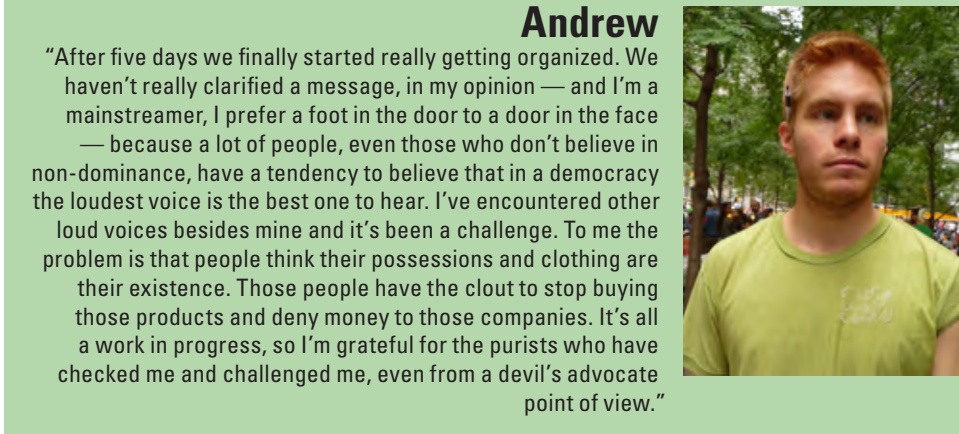
Zuveyda
“So far I’ve spent one night here. I came here because I was laid off two weeks ago. I found out there was basically nothing better I could be doing with my time. I spent a lot of time looking for a new job, and there was nothing I could find. I only have an associate’s degree, which may not be much but I thought it would get me further than a mediocre minimum-wage job.”



Bell
“I’m from south Germany. I was just passing through New York and I heard about the protest. The negative impact of this crazy system is an ever-growing problem — it’s not just the United States. We have these same problems in Germany. We have a single bank that has been propped up by \$720 billion while we face cuts to our education system. The whole German education system — school, books, everything — could be entirely revamped with what we gave to just one bank.”



Tracy
“I tried to get a lot of friends to come out here, and I’m here alone. A lot of people don’t want to stand up for stuff they talk about all the time or address problems they see all the time, so I wanted to be here. Despite everything it’s been a fun atmosphere, chilled, relaxed. But I also do really like marching around and going to Wall Street to tell them how much I don’t like them.”



Andrew
“After five days we finally started really getting organized. We haven’t really clarified a message, in my opinion — and I’m a mainstreamer, I prefer a foot in the door to a door in the face — because a lot of people, even those who don’t believe in non-dominance, have a tendency to believe that in a democracy the loudest voice is the best one to hear. I’ve encountered other loud voices besides mine and it’s been a challenge. To me the problem is that people think their possessions and clothing are their existence. Those people have the clout to stop buying those products and deny money to those companies. It’s all a work in progress, so I’m grateful for the purists who have checked me and challenged me, even from a devil’s advocate point of view.”

MAKE FREEDOM: From marches and teach-ins to agitpop art and mass arrests, not even the organizers of the Wall Street Occupation could have expected such a wide variety of democratic discourse and confrontation. Police detained over 100 protesters during the second weekend of the protest-city, triggering even more support for the growing anti-corporatist movement.

CREDITS (L to R): ELLEN DAVIDSON, SOPHIE FORBES (2), FLICKR.COM/BRENNAN CAVANAUGH, FLICKR.COM/CARWIL, SOPHIE FORBES, FLICKR.COM/_PAULS_, ELLEN DAVIDSON.



Inside Mexico's Peace Movement

BY KRISTIN BRICKER

ACAPULCO, MEXICO — On Sept. 10, thousands of people marched through the besieged resort town of Acapulco to greet the Caravan for Peace with Dignity and Justice led by Javier Sicilia, a poet who ignited a nationwide movement against drug war violence this spring after his son was murdered.

In recent years, Acapulco has endured a plague of violence — beheadings, massacres of tourists, kidnapping of schoolchildren and demands from criminal gangs that teachers pay 50 percent of their salaries as protection money. In the vast majority of the cases, no one has been charged with these crimes.

Armed with signs and T-shirts that said “No more violence,” “Stop kidnappings and crime,” and “No more militarization, we want education,” locals faced down their fear of being identified by *halcones* or cartel spies, and marched for peace.

“They asked me if I was afraid to participate,” said Yuridia Betancourt, whose son Christian Obeth was kidnapped on March 19. “I’m panicked. But I’m more afraid to stay at home with my arms crossed.”

However, moments after the peace march swept by Zaragoza Street, several blocks from the central plaza where the marchers rallied, unidentified gunmen shot and killed Antelmo Petatan Vasquez in his taxi in broad daylight, a fate shared by a growing number of cabbies who are often suspected of working as informants for the cartels or are forced to pay them “quotas” in exchange for the right to work. Petatan Vasquez was one of eight people murdered that day in Acapulco; three were killed during the march.

Petatan Vasquez’s killing marked another in the more than 40,000 deaths that have occurred in Mexico since conservative President Felipe Calderón escalated the government’s war on drug cartels in January 2007. It also underscored the challenges faced by Sicilia and the antiwar movement as it ventured into southern Mexico for the first time, hoping to build on earlier momentum.

BREAKING THE FEAR

Rural and mountainous, southern Mexico is more impoverished and has a much greater percentage of indigenous peoples than the northern part of the country. And while southern Mexico generally has less violent crime than northern states, organized crime and government security forces are victimizing certain sectors of the population at alarming rates.

Located several hundred miles southwest of Mexico City, the state of Guerrero bore the brunt of a government counter-insurgency campaign against leftist guerrillas from the 1960s to 1980s. The *Guerra Sucia* (or, “Dirty War”) carried out by the army and its paramilitary allies officially ended almost three decades ago. Nowadays, Guerrero residents are suffering some of the worst abuses of the drug war, as, the military remained in Guerrero and a climate of government corruption has assured that crimes committed against locals are almost never punished.

“The Dirty War never ended in Guerrero,” argues Rosario Cabañas, the niece of Guerrero school teacher and guerrilla leader Lucio Cabañas who was killed in 1974. “Unfortunately, thanks to [the Dirty War], peace and justice were lost. For 40 years, there has been impunity and injustice.”

Calderón’s militarized response disrupted drug trafficking routes and the cartels began to battle for control of Guerrero, which includes the coastal enclave of Acapulco. Residents found themselves caught in the middle. Unsurprisingly, the conflation of political and criminal violence gave birth in Guerrero to Mexico’s first narco-paramilitary organization, the “Liberator of the People Army” led by local political boss Rogaciano Alba.

SHARING STORIES

Composed of 15 buses carrying more than 700 activists, journalists and family members of victims, the caravan rolled through



THEIR GRIEF IS NOT A CRY FOR WAR A relative holds a photo of Gabriela Arelene Benitez Ybarra at a Caravan for Peace event held in the town of Xalapa in the state of Veracruz. Benito Ybarra, 17, disappeared July 13 on her way to school. Her body was later found in a shallow grave.

19 towns and cities in seven states over 10 days in mid-September. At every stop, *caravaneros* and locals marched for peace. The marches always ended in rallies where drug war victims from the north shared the stage with local victims to tell the world about how they have suffered in the so-called “war on organized crime.” At each stop, Sicilia’s Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity collected complaints about violence and human rights abuses, just as they had done in the north.

Mexico’s drug cartels were significantly strengthened in the early 1990s as junior partners to their counterparts in Colombia

who were finding it increasingly difficult to ship cocaine to the United States through the Caribbean. In recent years, thanks in large part to the Colombian cartels’ decreased control over shipping routes, the Mexican cartels have become fully diversified organized crime syndicates and have expanded into new areas such as kidnapping, extortion, prostitution and human trafficking.

Approximately 40 Central American migrants traveled with the Peace Caravan, calling attention to how the cartels frequently prey on immigrants.

Mexico’s harsh U.S.-backed immigration laws force the hundreds of thousands of Central American migrants who enter Mexico each year to travel clandestinely, which puts them at great risk of being kidnapped by organized crime, caravan participants explained. When migrants are detained by authorities, they are sometimes

handed over to criminal groups for a bribe.

During the caravan, the Central American migrants described how the gangs take people like themselves to safe houses where they are forced to call their families or friends in the United States and hold the telephone in their hands while the criminals torture them into begging their families for ransom money: “I saw them cut off a 14-year-old boy’s finger while his father was listening on the phone,” said one Salvadoran immigrant who says that he, too, was tortured.

Female immigrants are sometimes forced

POLICING, INDIGENOUS STYLE

While the Mexican state of Guerrero is plagued by both drug war violence and police corruption, it is also home to one of the most innovative criminal justice projects in the country: the community police. In 1995, when indigenous residents of Guerrero’s Sierra Costa region could no longer tolerate the general state of lawlessness in their communities, they turned to traditional indigenous policing methods. Seventy-eight towns replaced government police with unpaid, elected community police and prison terms with community service.

While the community police have been unable to keep cartels from trafficking drugs through their territory, they

have been able to minimize the violent crime that is often associated with the industry. The community police claim that over the past 16 years they have reduced crime in their region by 98 percent.

“There’s hardly any robbery, rape, or violence. The criminals fled the area, because they know that the community will sentence them to five, seven, eleven years of community service,” explains Emilio, a community police officer. “With the government, if they arrest you, they’ll let you go the next day if you pay them. We don’t accept bribes. Here, you work hard every day, and every night you return to jail. And you always serve out your sentence. You think [criminals] want to wind up like that? No.”

The community police have an immediate response proto-

col for kidnappings that involves the entire community, not just the police. “One time the narcos kidnapped two community police officers,” recounts Emilio. The community police mobilized the entire town to save the kidnapped officers. “We organized checkpoints on all of the highways out of town, and we patrolled the city. The narcos got nervous, so the next day they freed them.”

The community police sent a commission to Acapulco with a message to the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity: “We hope that our experience ... will be part of your struggle. There is no other way to confront violence than with collective organization.”

—K.B.

Student Movement Stirs Up Chile

BY SHALINI ADNANI

into prostitution or made to perform in pornographic movies. German Guillermo Ramirez Garduaza of the “Santa Faustina Kowalska” migrant shelter in Veracruz estimates that 80 percent of female Central American migrants are raped in Mexico.

Danira Meléndez, a Honduran migrant, recalled how her coyote (paid guide) demanded that she have sex with him. “He told me, ‘Here, I’m just one man. But I work with the Zetas, and if I turn you over to them, it’ll be 15 or 20 men raping you,’” Meléndez recounted. “We know that female migrants are easy sexual merchandise for organized crime.”

A MILITANT TRADITION

Before the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity emerged, drug war victims were terrified, isolated and silent. On the two caravans, victims learned public speaking skills and how to organize protests and press conferences and hold more effective meetings with public officials. Now that the caravans are over, the victims will return to their communities, most of which now have local antiwar committees. Whereas before drug war victims were shunned, now they are in a position to become community leaders.

Citing lower turnouts at Peace Caravan events in the south, the Mexican media have portrayed the antiwar movement as losing support. However, this does not take into account the fact that the south has experienced less drug war violence than the north and in places that have been hard hit — like Guerrero and Veracruz — thousands of people turned out to protest the war. Moreover, the south has a long tradition of militant grassroots organizing (see sidebar) and resistance to military occupation that most of the north lacks. Whereas most northern drug war victims are just beginning to organize and define their politics, southern drug war victims are joining experienced organizations and hitting the ground running.

If southern organizations continue to collaborate with Sicilia’s national movement, they will likely provide a counterweight to Sicilia’s strong focus on engagement with authorities, which has included meeting with leaders of all three branches of a government that is widely seen as being complicit in the drug trade it claims to be fighting.

“We still don’t understand why they dedicate so much energy and effort to dialogue with a political class that long ago lost all will to govern and is nothing more than a gang of criminals,” the Zapatistas’ Subcomandante Marcos recently wrote, reflecting the sentiment of many groups in the south.

Mexico holds presidential and congressional elections next year. It remains to be seen how the budding anti-war movement will affect the electoral process. Ultimately, the country’s future depends on whether Mexico’s civil society can be mobilized to cleanse the state of a culture of corruption and impunity that exists at all levels of government.

Kristin Bricker is a Mexico-based freelance journalist covering militarization, social movements and the drug war in Latin America. She blogs at mywordismyweapon.blogspot.com.

SANTIAGO—Chile is widely touted as a Latin American economic miracle of with an annual growth rate of 5 percent, stable finances and an average per capita income of more than \$15,000. Yet, its prosperity is belied by some of the highest income inequality in the region and a lack of social mobility.

From an early age, Chile’s students confront an education system that is deeply segregated by class in which government monies flow into privately run schools while public schools are starved for funds. To receive a university education, students from poor and working-class families have to go deep into debt to afford tuition, which can be as much as \$20,000 per year — a figure inconceivable for the average Chilean.

It’s a scenario that would be familiar to many students in the U.S. But unlike their docile American counterparts, Chilean students are taking action to remake their education system.

Since protests began in May at the University of Chile, the student movement has carried out a nationwide strike in universities and high schools that now enters its fourth month. The movement’s largest protests have drawn hundreds of thousands of people. The students are garnering support from teachers, workers and families struggling to pay for their childrens’ education. Support for the students’ cause runs as high as 80 percent in public opinion polls.

The students have peacefully occupied high school and university campuses in provinces throughout the country, turning the buildings into communal spaces. When the takeovers (or, *tomas* as they are called in Chile) peaked in mid-August, students were occupying 500 high schools and 22 universities in the capital of Santiago alone. During these occupations, groups of students would remain inside schools around the clock, cook donated food, teach individual workshops, and organize activities on the campuses.

Theaters were converted into general assemblies and theater balconies served as a bedroom.

The students are using their creativity to emphasize the peaceful nature of the protests. Innovative demonstrations have included zombie dances of Michael Jackson’s “Thriller” (to underscore the neoliberal state’s zombie-like hold on their futures), two minutes of national lip-lock— *El Besaton*, or The Kissathon — to signify the love and passion inherent in the student movement, a month-long relay race around the Presidential Palace, and many more such actions.

After a similar strike by high school stu-

dents peetered out in 2006, the election of rightwing billionaire President Sebastian Piñera in 2010 reanimated the student movement which insists that education is a social good that should be available to all.

University student demands include a new system of scholarships (not loans) to provide free education to poor and working class students, a more equitable admissions process to prestigious universities, the creations of a watchdog agency to prosecute universities using loopholes to earn profits and a repeal of laws forbidding student participa-

The Chilean students have mounted the strongest challenge to their country’s neoliberal order in four decades...

tion in university governance.

The high school students, more loosely organized, are pressing similar demands for more state funding as well as a moratorium on the creation of more publicly funded charter schools, an end to a system of local control of schools that leads to inequalities, as well as free access to public transportation.

More than confronting a highly priva-

but the neoliberal framework developed during the dictatorship has been perpetuated by coalition governments of both the center-left and the center-right.

The government has responded to the student movement with tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons while pro-government media outlets have unsuccessfully sought to write off student activists as “delinquents”. Violence erupted on August 5 when Chilean authorities prevented student demonstrators from entering downtown Santiago and on Aug. 25 when police shot and killed a 16-year-old student protester.

The younger generation that came of age after the dictatorship, does not have the fear of their parents’ generation and their actions have reawakened older Chileans who had despaired of ever seeing real change again in their country. The dream of the Allende years of a socially inclusive Chile has not vanished in spite of almost four decades of neoliberal social engineering.

“I am surprised...[but]...the movement confirms what I have been predicting and feeling for awhile,” Chilean economist Gabriel Salazar told CNN Chile. “...This civil transition from the bottom is very different from a political transition from above.”

With support for the students running strong, Piñera has sought to co-opt the movement with half-measures such as a modest increase in scholarship money and slightly lower interest rates on student loans that don’t fundamentally change the education system. He has also sought to outwait the student movement by initiating negotiations that have gone nowhere.

Sustaining a high level of mobilization over many months is difficult and students face losing a whole school year as the strike drags on. Police have begun to dislodge students from many of the occupied schools, and the government has extended the end of the school year from December to March and threatened to revoke the scholarships of students who do not finish their classes. This has created divisions within the movement as some students have much more to lose than others by continuing the strike.

Still, the student movement continues to organize large protests and enjoys the support of the majority of the population. Whether it can force the political class to reorient the education system to meet human needs instead of market imperatives remains to be decided — both on the campuses and in the streets.

Shalini Adnani is a freelance journalist based in Santiago, Chile.



CLASS ISSUES: Students protest in the streets of Santiago, Chile.

tized education system, the student movement has mounted the strongest challenge to Chile’s neoliberal order since it was imposed through a 1973 military coup that toppled the democratically-elected socialist government of Salvador Allende and left thousands of his supporters dead or in exile. Democracy was formally restored in Chile in 1989

Palestinian Statehood: A Desperate Strategy

BY ALI ABUNIMAH

What do you do if your decades-long campaign to bring about an independent Palestinian state on those fractions of historic Palestine known as the West Bank and Gaza Strip has resulted in total failure?

The answer, if you are the Western-sponsored Palestinian Authority (PA) in Israeli-occupied Ramallah, is to pretend you have a Palestinian state anyway and to get as many other countries to join in this charade as possible.

This appears to be the essence of the PA strategy to gain admittance for the “State of Palestine” to the U.N. General Assembly.

The PA has lobbied hard for countries to support the move, and a number of states, particularly in Latin America, have extended full diplomatic recognition to the Ramallah authority. *The New York Times* cited diplomats who say that if brought to a vote in the U.N. General Assembly, the measure would likely pass.

A FANTASY ‘STATE’

The PA’s push for recognition of a Palestinian state is the diplomatic counterpart to its much-touted “institution-building” and “economic development” efforts, which are supposed to create the infrastructure for a future state.

But the institution-building program is nothing more than a mirage, boosted by public relations tricks and good press.

In fact, the main “institutions” the PA has built are the police state and militia apparatuses used to repress political opposition to the PA and any form of resistance to Israeli occupation. Meanwhile the economy of the West Bank and the PA itself remain completely dependent on foreign aid.

U.N. recognition of a Palestinian make-believe state would be no more meaningful than this fantasy “institution-building,” and could push Palestinians even further away from real liberation and self-determination.

Figures from the Ramallah-based PA have justified their U.N. recognition strategy as a way to bring international pressure to bear on Israel.

“Such recognition would create political and legal pressure on Israel to withdraw its forces from the land of another state that is recognized with the [1967] borders,” Ra-

mallah foreign minister Riyad al-Malki told reporters in January.

Similarly, Nabil Shaath, a top Fatah official, explained to *The New York Times* that if a Palestinian state were recognized by the U.N.: “Israel would then be in daily violation of the rights of a fellow member state and diplomatic and legal consequences could follow, all of which would be painful for Israel.”

But can anyone who has seen how the “international community” functions when it comes to Israel believe such delusional expectations?

Lebanon has been a member state of the United Nations since 1945 and yet this did not prevent Israel from occupying southern Lebanon from 1978 until 2000. Israel’s occupation of Lebanon ended not because of any international pressure, but only because the Lebanese resistance drove Israel and its collaborating militias out.

Since its massive bombardment of Lebanon in 2006, Israel has violated Lebanon’s sovereignty thousands of times — according to the United Nations itself. But its constant overflights of Lebanese airspace and kidnapping of Lebanese citizens among other violations have never prompted “diplomatic and legal consequences” to hold Israel accountable.

Similarly, since 1967 Israel has occupied the Golan Heights, which belong to Syria (also a U.N. member since 1945). There has been virtually no armed resistance on the Golan Heights nor has there been any international pressure for Israel to withdraw or for Syrian refugees to be allowed to return to their homes.

Even after Israel illegally annexed the territory in 1981 — a move condemned by the U.N. Security Council — the international community’s silence has allowed Israel’s colonization of the Golan Heights to continue unabated.

Why would the situation in the “State of Palestine” be any different?

‘PAPER’ VICTORIES

The effort to seek diplomatic recognition for an imaginary Palestinian state on a fraction of historic Palestine is a strategy of desperation from a Palestinian leadership that has run out of options, lost its legitimacy and become a serious obstacle in the way of Palestinians regaining their rights.

Relying heavily on diplomatic forums and the good will of the “international community” has also been tried before and produced no results. Recall that in 2004, the PA expended enormous efforts to obtain an advisory ruling from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague that Israel’s apartheid wall in the West Bank is illegal and must be torn down.

But beyond obtaining the ruling, the PA had absolutely no strategy to mobilize Palestinians and their allies to pressure the world to actually implement the decision. It was a paper victory that resulted in no change on the ground.

Indeed, there is significant evidence that while the PA’s diplomatic corps and negotiators were busy in The Hague, the leadership sought to stifle attempts by Palestinian civil society organizations in the West Bank and East Jerusalem to organize around and bring attention to the ICJ ruling, almost certainly due to pressure by Israel and the United States.

Would the government of an “independent Palestine” still under Israeli occupation and reliant on aid from the United States and the European Union be able to stand similar pressure in the future? The PA’s record to date offers no basis for optimism.

In spite of these efforts, the ICJ opinion did have one important consequence. It was not the PA or the defunct Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that began to mobilize.

Rather, amid the inaction from world governments to enforce the ICJ ruling, Palestinian civil society independently issued the 2005 Palestinian Call for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS).

This campaign seeks to isolate Israel and pressure it to respect Palestinian rights and international law, through popular boycotts similar to those that helped end apartheid in South Africa.

Rather than fetishizing “statehood,” the BDS campaign focuses on rights and realities: it calls for an end to Israel’s occupation and colonization of all Arab lands conquered in 1967, full equality for Palestinian citizens of Israel, and respect for and implementation of the rights of Palestinian refugees. These demands are all fully consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international law.

The PA has never endorsed this campaign,

and in fact has sought to distract from and undermine it by calling only for a half-hearted boycott of Israeli settlement goods while actively promoting trade with Israel in violation of the BDS call.

BANTUSTAN REDUX

Many have accurately likened the Palestinian “state” envisaged by the PA and its sponsors to the “bantustans” of apartheid South Africa.

The bantustans were nominally independent states set up by the apartheid regime to grant “citizenship” to blacks, as a way to derail demands for true equality.

World governments did not fall for the trick and refused to recognize the bantustans because they understood that diplomatic recognition for these entities would actually set back the struggle to end South African apartheid.

Not coincidentally, the only country to have had extensive dealings with the bantustans — allowing them to open diplomatic missions and frequently receiving their leaders — was Israel. Israel saw the bantustans as a model for how it would one day manage the Palestinians.

Recognition of a Palestinian “state” under Israeli occupation would certainly solidify and perpetuate the privileges and positions of unelected PA officials, while doing nothing to change the conditions or restore the rights of millions of Palestinians, not just in the territories occupied in the June 1967 war, but within Israel, and in the diaspora.

Far from increasing international pressure on Israel, it may even allow states that have utterly failed in their duty to hold Israel accountable to international law to wash their hands of the question of Palestine, under the mantra of “we recognized Palestine, what more do you want from us?”

Palestinians and their allies should not be distracted by this international theater of the absurd, but should focus on building wider and deeper BDS campaigns to end Israeli apartheid everywhere that it exists, once and for all.

Ali Abunimah is the co-founder of electronicintifada.net. An earlier version of this article appeared on english.aljazeera.net.



Poetry & Music for Palestine (Left) A member of Klezmer Musicians Against the Wall plays the trumpet during a benefit concert at Colors restaurant in Manhattan. (Above) Spoken word poet Remi Kanazi performs during the same event. The concert also featured musicians from Mexico and was a joint.

Occupy

Continued from page 9

regularly enlisted force in attempting to evacuate the occupied squares.

One reason that occupying the square is so exhilarating is because it nurtures communities that reject the sterility and alienation of urban space produced by neoliberal capitalism. Neoliberalism depends on people seeking fulfillment in ever-rising levels of consumption that require individuals to work longer hours, get into debt and let their relationships with family, friends and neighbors — the true source of happiness — atrophy.

This rampant individualism is often complemented by reactionary definitions of community that seek to scapegoat immigrants and other minorities for the serious social problems that free-market policies invariably produce. Against the hate and selfishness that neoliberalism breeds, occupied public squares allow relationships to flourish between new acquaintances and old friends, while fostering a world based on solidarity that exposes the cynical, cut-throat nature of the present.

These movements offer as well a vision of direct democracy and self-organization that reflects the delegitimization of the economic and political elites who continue to reward themselves for their role in bringing about the crisis, even as they lecture the poorest and weakest for the supposedly lavish salaries, pensions and social rights and benefits that they enjoy.

As the dispossessed realize that the privileged rulers are unwilling and unable to represent the interests of society as a whole, more and more people are concluding that only their active participation in the decisions that affect their lives will guarantee that their needs and aspirations will be taken into account.

At the same time, the demand of direct democracy indicates the delegitimization of institutionalized politics in general, including left-wing parties and labor unions. The

movement of occupying public squares reminds us that a radical alternative to capitalism has to challenge not just the concentration of wealth but also the divisions between rulers who deliberate, plan and make decisions and masses consigned to unquestioningly carrying out other people's orders.

But direct democracy and self-organization are more than a demand. They are living practices that empower ordinary people by revealing to them their ability to effect change and take control of their own lives. This discovery is often born of necessity, as when Egyptian protesters found themselves directing traffic after the Mubarak regime was forced to withdraw the police from the streets or when protesters in Athens devised peacemaking committees to prevent violent clashes with police actively looking for an excuse to forcibly evacuate the squares. This discovery of self-rule challenges the premise underlying the militarization of police in the neoliberal era, namely the belief that a repressive apparatus is the sine qua non of public safety.

For years neoliberal ideology has equated capitalism with freedom and democracy. As the realities of growing inequality, unemployment and economic and ecological crisis become harder to escape, this idea is fraying. When the destructive decisions made by the few on top of the socio-economic pyramid are plain to see, and when everyone else is forced to pay for the sin of her leaders, the realization that capitalism and democracy are antithetical principles comes to the surface. The movements of the squares are an expression of this emerging consciousness. The more successful these movements are in helping this consciousness spread, the greater their contribution will be to the formation of a majoritarian radical movement that is strong and confident enough to pass from defense to offense.

Costas Panayotakis teaches sociology at the New York City College of Technology and is the author of Remaking Scarcity: From Capitalist Inefficiency to Economic Democracy, which will be published by Pluto Press in November 2011.

The Tools To Do Justice...



CUNY SCHOOL OF LAW

Law in the Service of Human Needs

www.law.cuny.edu

Visit Us Year-Round at School or
Come Meet Us at the New York Law Forum

NY Hilton, 54th St & 6th Ave., NYC
Friday October 14, Noon - 5:00pm &
Saturday, October 15, 10:00am - 4:00pm

Free Admission to Forum – visit www.lisac.org

THE SCHOOL OF LAW IS 



WBAI
99.5 FM

Mondays
at 9am


DOWNLOAD PODCASTS
at lawanddisorder.org

“Our basic constitutional rights are in jeopardy. “Law and Disorder” is an excellent magazine format radio show, hosted by progressive lawyers who analyze the state of civil rights in this post-9/11 period. From attacks on Muslims at home to torture abroad, “Law and Disorder” puts these constitutional attacks into perspective.”

—AMY GOODMAN,
HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!

Hosted by movement lawyers Heidi Boghosian, Executive Director, National Lawyers Guild; Michael Ratner, President, Center for Constitutional Rights; Michael Smith, New York City attorney and author

Now on Facebook.com



radical bookstore | activist center | fair trade cafe
172 ALLEN ST • 212-777-6028
bluestockings.com



THU OCT 6, 7PM • \$5 SUGG
DISCUSSION: QPOC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ART. Production company Butters Papi and grassroots organizers Queer Commons team up to show how to empower queer people of color using performance and art.

MON OCT 10, 7PM • FREE
READING: MILK AND HONEY, A CELEBRATION OF JEWISH LESBIAN POETRY. Editor Julie R. Enszer will discuss the new anthology.

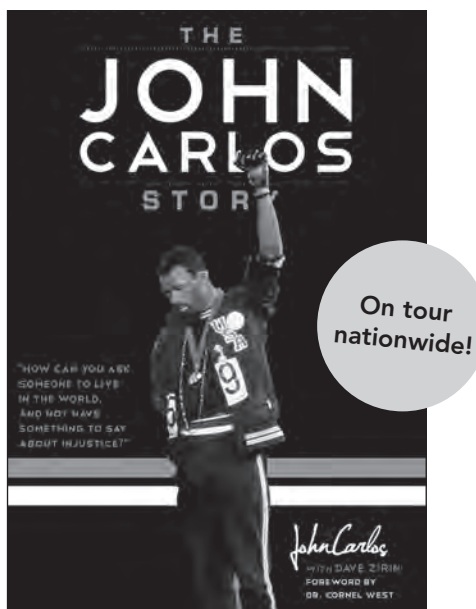
FRI OCT 14, 7PM • \$5 SUGG
READING: POLLUTING MAMA AND ENNUI. Satirist Deborah Hauser and professor Heidi Hutner, who combines memoir with cultural, literary and art analysis, read their works.



"John Carlos is an American hero." —Michael Moore

John Carlos and Tommie Smith's Black Power salute on the 1968 Olympic podium sparked controversy and career fallout. Yet it remains one of the most iconic images of the Black Power movement. Here is the story of one of the men behind the salute, lifelong activist, John Carlos.

By John Carlos
with Dave Zirin
Foreword by
Cornel West



"Carlos' athletic genius on the field is matched by his heroic will to overcome trials and tribulations in his personal life. . . . This is an inspiring and eloquent story about a great American whose commitment to truth, justice and democracy were tested and found true."

—Michael Eric Dyson

"An intelligent and insightful look into the journey of one of our most underrated heroes. . . . You can feel his passion (and his anger) in every word."

—Jemele Hill, ESPN

"A blow by blow detail of triumph vs tragedy from the jump. . . . This story drills a hole into the myth of black athlete success and worship."

—Chuck D, Public Enemy



Order online at www.haymarketbooks.org
\$24.95 •

31 years OF CELEBRATING music
OF peace AND resistance!

PEOPLES' VOICE



OCT. 15: Bev Grant; Sharleen Leahey

OCT. 22: Dave Lippman; TBA

OCT. 29: David Laibman; John Flynn

Nov. 5: TBA

Nov. 12: Cecilia St. King;

David Massengill

★ SATURDAYS AT 8 P.M. ★

Community Church of New York Unitarian-Universalist

40 E. 35th St. (Madison/Park)

New York, NY 10016

doors open 7:30; wheelchair accessible

212-787-3903

www.peoplesvoicecafe.org

Suggested Donation: \$15 to \$18 or TDF; \$10 PVC Members

More if you choose; Less if you can't; No one turned away

[doors open at 7:30]

REVIEW

Red Scares Then and Now

"THE STRUGGLE FOR FREE SPEECH
AT CCNY, 1931-42"
CUNY GRADUATE CENTER
365 FIFTH AVE.
THROUGH OCT. 28

Once-Proud Campus a Breeding Ground for Idiots—this was the headline of a 2001 editorial published in the *New York Post* reporting on a post-9/11 teach-in at the City College of New York (CCNY). Though the teach-in focused on fostering a progressive and pragmatic discussion among professors and students about the 9/11 attacks, the mainstream media saw this gathering as a radical attack against America itself (the *Post* also ran a more prominent article on the teach-in, with the headline: "CCNY Bashes America").

Ten years later, with our interminable Middle East military

where it can travel forever in the ether. Seemingly unchanged from its early 2000s debut, the website is a fine example of the sort of web 1.0 resource that no one makes anymore — a simple, valuable look at a major moment in activist history.

During the 1930s, CCNY — a cheap school filled with working-class students — was a hotbed of left-wing activism. Smith posits that the radical student organizations of CCNY had a profound influence on progressive politics in the following decades. Quoting history professor Robert Cohen: "The student rebels of the Depression era rank among the most effective radical organizers in the history of American student politics." Thirties-era radicals pro-

ary response to student movements which reverberated into the rest of the 20th century. In 1940, New York State legislators created the Rapp-Coudert Committee to quell potential "subversive activities" in New York public schools. Rapp-Coudert's techniques — secret hearings, public denunciations and the summary firings of suspected Communists — set the standard for the House Un-American Activities Committee's red-scares and blacklists of the coming decade. As Smith put it in a recent article for *Academe* magazine, the Rapp-Coudert hearings served as "the dress rehearsal for McCarthyism." It is worth noting, though, that by the time of the Rapp-Coudert hearings, the horrors of Stalin had already done much to undo the radical Left from within.

Looking at Smith's exhibit, it's strange to consider how much of



ROBERT WAGNER LABOR ARCHIVES, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY



CCNY ARCHIVES



NEW YORK STATE ARCHIVES

adventures garnering such mixed feelings in the country at large, it's worth remembering the time — right after the fall — that the war drums were beating frantically, loudly enough to muffle everything else.

Carol Smith certainly remembers. A former CCNY professor, she was one of the organizers of the 2001 teach-in. The silencing of academics in the wake of 9/11 inspired her to curate "The Struggle for Free Speech at CCNY, 1931-42," a traveling exhibit documenting the surge of Depression-era radicalism at City College, along with the vicious (and quite effective) right-wing backlash. Currently installed at CCNY's Center for Worker Education in downtown Manhattan, the exhibit itself is a small affair — just a handful of printed panels in a nondescript hallway. As a traveling exhibit, it's much better suited to the internet,

duced a wealth of appealing visual ephemera, and this is the meat of Smith's exhibit: hand-drawn flyers for upcoming rallies, two-fisted cartoons from Communist dailies, pages from samizdat and teacher-produced publications. Frederick B. Robinson, the hawkish and censor-happy school president, is featured in some particularly angry caricatures: he's portrayed variously as a Nazi newsie, a fat-butted flatfoot, and a proud kitty-cat whose tail is wagged by Tammany Hall (obviously). A cartoon from *The Daily Worker*, drawn in the thick of the Depression, features the memorable picket sign "We Refuse to Starve!"

But, more than the protests, walk-outs, mobilizations and publications, it was the reaction-

what it depicts still feels familiar. While the stories of powerful unions and populist American radicalism feel, more and more, consigned to another era, the fear of Communism — more than 20 years after the end of the Soviet Union — has yet to cool. At a time when a great many Americans seem to consider centrist liberal policies as some coded form of radical socialism, it's worth taking a look at the past: considering what, for good or bad, radical activism really looks like, and remembering that, over time, attacks on free speech just don't hold up well. This is America, after all.

To access the exhibit online, go to virtualny.cuny.edu/gutter/panels/panel1.html.

—MIKE NEWTON

Who's Afraid of Frances Fox Piven?

The Essential Writings of the Professor Glenn Beck Loves to Hate

How is it that **FRANCES FOX PIVEN**, a distinguished university professor, past president of the American Sociological Association, and recipient of numerous awards and accolades for her work, could suddenly find herself all over the Internet—and Fox TV—as the subject of a vicious and relentless hate campaign spearheaded by darling of the right Glenn Beck?

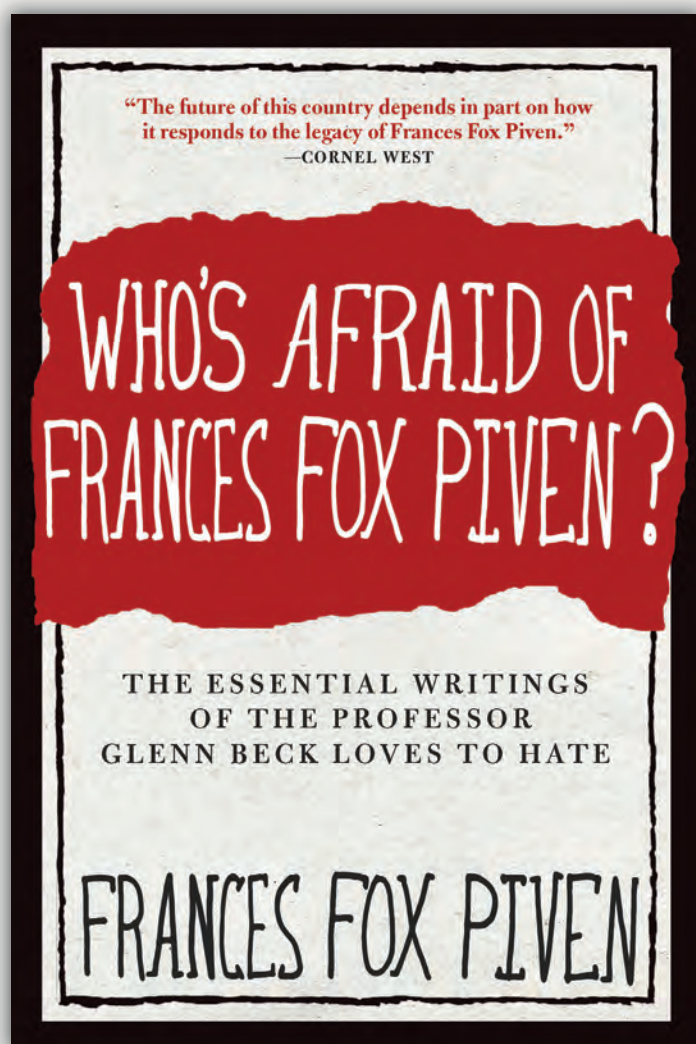
Is she “an enemy of the constitution” (Glenn Beck)?

Or is she “the embodiment of the best of American democracy” (*The Nation*)?

Now you can decide.



PHOTO BY PETER WALDVOGEL



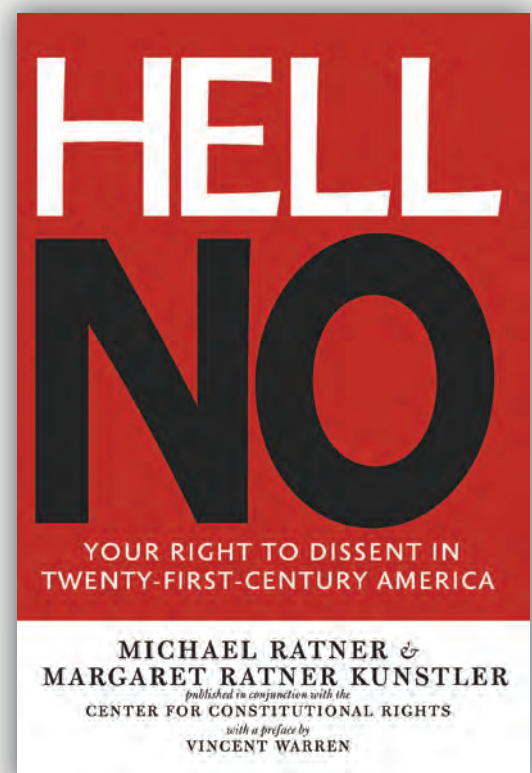
“The future of the country depends in part on how it responds to the legacy of Frances Fox Piven.”

—CORNEL WEST

“Piven asks essential questions.”

—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

Also just published:



HELL NO:

Your Right to Dissent in Twenty-First-Century America

Michael Ratner and Margaret Ratner Kunstler explore attacks upon and criminalization of dissent and protest, from the surveillance of activists to the disruption of demonstrations and from the labeling of protestors as “terrorists” to the jailing of those the government claims are giving “material support” to its perceived enemies. *Hell No* is an indispensable tool in the effort to give free speech and protest meaning in a post-9/11 world.



THE NEW PRESS
Celebrating 19 Years of Independent Publishing
www.thenewpress.com

what every environmentalist needs to know about CAPITALISM

a talk by **FRED MAGDOFF**
& **JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER**

6 PM, Saturday, October 22

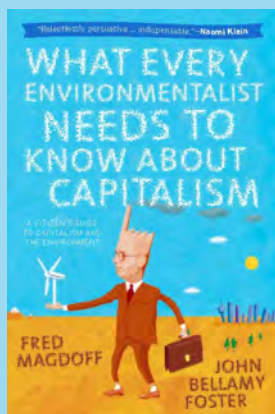
The Brecht Forum

451 West Street

(between Bank & Bethune Streets)

New York, NY 10014

Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$15 (Free for Brecht Forum Subscribers)



“Relentlessly persuasive... indispensable.”
—**NAOMI KLEIN**
author, *The Shock Doctrine*

Join the authors for a discussion
of their new book
*What Every Environmentalist
Needs to Know about Capitalism:
A Citizen's Guide to Capitalism
and the Environment*

sponsored by
Monthly Review Press,
the *Independent*, & the Brecht Forum

new from **MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS** \$13.95 pbk | 187 pages
to order: www.monthlyreview.org | 800.670.9499

REVIEWS

Waiting for Reform

American Teacher
DIRECTED BY VANESSA ROTH
DISTRIBUTED BY FIRST RUN
FEATURES, 2011

It seems that filmmaker Vanessa Roth and producers Dave Eggers and Ninive Calegari had a very specific audience in mind for their documentary *American Teacher*: those “rational” people who actually think that teachers are overpaid. Given the popularity of the 2010 film *Waiting for ‘Superman,’* which championed the charter school model as the paragon of educational reform and laid much of the blame for problems squarely on teachers and their unions, the prospect that there are a lot of minds that need changing is worth considering. A production of the nonprofit Teacher’s Salary Project, which itself resulted from the (ironically titled) 2005 book *Teachers Have It Easy: The Big Sacrifices and Small Salaries of America’s Teachers*, *American Teacher* excels in illustrating the daunting challenges and, frankly, insulting remuneration to which teachers are subjected by following the lives and financial plights of four passionate educators.

Sprinkled amongst these stories are the requisite advocacy film shots of talking heads who testify to the sad treatment of teachers, and the resulting ill effects that salary decline has on the educational system.

In its most compelling moments, the film serves as a window into the financial stresses of some talented teachers. Erik Benner, a teacher working in rural Texas, flirts with

financial ruin while holding down a second job at a local Home Depot in an attempt to provide his family with the trappings of a middle-class lifestyle. We watch Brooklyn elementary school teacher Jamie Fidler, having burned through her six-week maternity leave following the birth of her first child, embark on an epic odyssey during a planning period to find a schoolroom in which she can use her breast pump in private. Jonathan Dearman flees the teaching profession completely in favor of a job working as a real estate broker in San Francisco, where he easily pulls down a salary that is many times more than what he earned as an educator.

Unfortunately, *American Teacher*

teacher salary reform, but stop short of spelling out how. The film also glosses over schools that are promoted as potential reform models, such as the Teacher Equity Project (TEP), a charter school operating in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City. On its website, the TEP claims to have fashioned a financial model that provides teachers with annual salaries of \$125,000 while relying “almost exclusively on the public funding it receives as a New York City Charter School.” But for whatever reason, the film leaves both the assertion and the school largely unexamined. The film also leaves one wondering what effect these proposed salary changes would have on teachers’ unions.



gets bogged down in hammering home the one-note argument that teachers are underpaid — devoting almost three-quarters of its screen time to this thesis — and pays scant attention to possible solutions to the problem. The filmmakers allude to the idea that the scheduled retirement of about half of the country’s teachers over the next ten years will provide the perfect setting for wholesale

While *American Teacher* gamely rises to the defense of educators, it is weakened by its reluctance to levy criticism at any specific quarter. The put-upon teachers are deservedly heralded by students, parents, administrators and each other, left unsaid is who exactly is to blame for the declining state of the public education system.

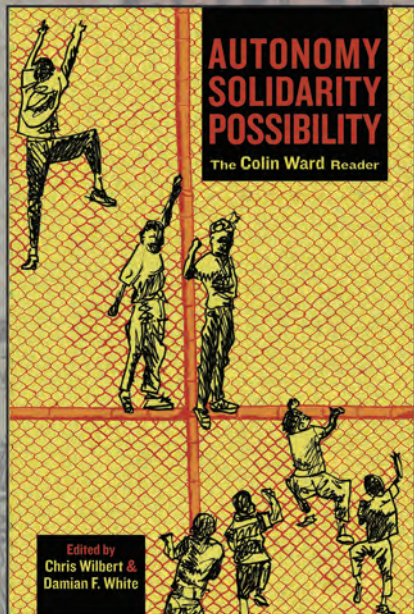
—RAHUL CHADHA

NEW FROM AK PRESS

Ed. Chris Wilbert
and
Damian F. White

**AUTONOMY
SOLIDARITY
POSSIBILITY**

The
COLIN WARD Reader



*Six decades of revolutionary pragmatism from
Britain's most famous living anarchist.*

ISBN: 978-1-84935-020-4 | 6X9, 376pp | \$21.95

AVAILABLE OCTOBER 2011

Preorder now and get 25% off the cover price of \$21.95
<http://www.akpress.org>

REVOLUTION BY THE BOOK

AK PRESS PUBLISHING AND DISTRIBUTION • OAKLAND, EDINBURGH, BALTIMORE

Breaking the Girl

True Things About Me
BY DEBORAH KAY DAVIES
FABER AND FABER, 2011

How does a nice girl end up in an abusive relationship? This is the question Deborah Kay Davies explores in her riveting novel *True Things About Me*, an account of the unraveling of one such nameless “nice girl” from the girl’s own perspective. While we may not be any closer to a “why” by the story’s end, the frank and extensive description of

“how” makes this the most riveting thing you’re likely to read this year.

The unnamed protagonist, who works in a social services office in an anonymous town in the U.K., leaves her job one evening to find herself, 10 minutes later, slammed up against a garage wall having sex with a stranger. Her ensuing entanglement with the man soon takes over her thoughts, her job and her entire life. The fact that the ostensible victim is the one telling the story makes it no more comprehensible — she often fails to understand her own motivations — and instead creates the lurid sensation that we’re reading a train wreck in progress.

Davies’ background in poetry and short stories is evident in the

novel’s minimal and incisive prose. She expertly avoids embellishing her protagonist, whose increasingly outrageous acts bewilder and alienate her friends and family, as her understanding of her life is stripped down layer by layer until we’re not sure of what’s left.

This harrowing and psychologically complex story offers an invaluable insight into a world that — unfortunately — too many real women inhabit. In the vein of Emma Donoghue’s *Room*, which strives to make unimaginable abuse palpable, *True Things About Me* is an arresting first novel that marks its author as a voice to note.

—IRINA IVANOVA

Editing Made Free and Easy*

FREE MEMBERSHIP

FREE Final Cut Pro Studio Labs

BRAND NEW Apple Computers

Is it really Free? The answer is simply "yes." Manhattan Neighborhood Network has been serving the Manhattan community with **FREE** access to video equipment for over 15 years. We only thrive if Manhattan Residents use our **FREE** equipment.

Don't know how to use it? We also have **FREE** Final Cut Studio Classes. All you have to do is bring in proof that you live in Manhattan!



537 West 59th Street

www.mnn.org

212-757-2670 x312

Facebook + Twitter

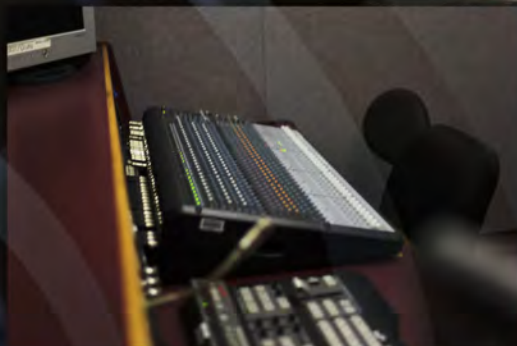
*For Manhattan Residents ONLY

MNN Studios are your Playground*

FREE MEMBERSHIP

FREE Control Room and Studio Camera Classes

FREE Three Point Lighting Training



Is it really Free? The answer is simply "yes." Manhattan Neighborhood Network has been serving the Manhattan community with **FREE** access to video equipment for over 15 years. We only thrive if Manhattan Residents use our **FREE** equipment.

Don't know how to use it? We also have **FREE** Studio Classes. All you have to do is bring in proof that you live in Manhattan!

537 West 59th Street

www.mnn.org

212-757-2670 x312

Facebook + Twitter



*For Manhattan Residents ONLY

THE INDYPENDENT

CHANGE IS POSSIBLE— BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP NOW!

WE HAVE TO RAISE \$30,000 BY THE END OF THIS YEAR TO CONTINUE PUBLISHING IN 2012. SO IF YOU WERE CHEERED BY TAHRIR AND HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY UPRISINGS FROM WISCONSIN TO SPAIN TO WALL STREET, PLEASE DONATE GENEROUSLY AND HELP KEEP THE INDY GOING STRONG. WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!



TO DONATE, go to indypendent.org/donate.
Or send a check made out to
THE INDYPENDENT:
666 Broadway, Suite 500, New York, NY 10012